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50 RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN New screenshots for this stunning FPS.



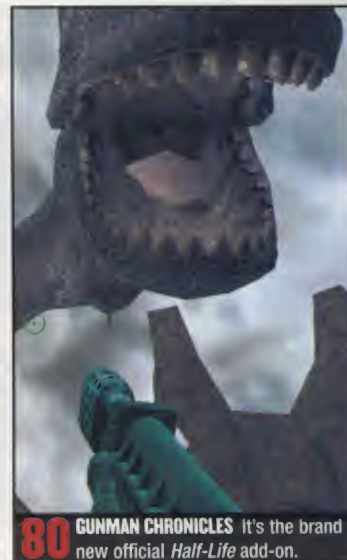
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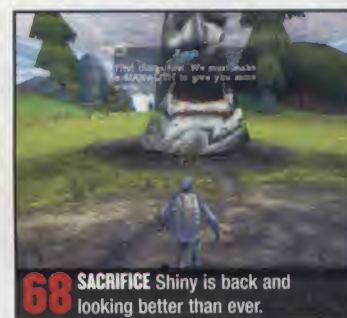
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FULL DETAILS
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FIVE EXCLUSIVE AND
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PGA CHAMPIONSHIP
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HITMAN
GIFT
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BREAKOUT
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WIN! **THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS** Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (97), PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Wednesday December 13 2000. The winner of our November (#95) cover compo was Ms Vicki Parsons of Herts, who wins something from the *PC ZONE* cupboard for sending in the correct answer to our last little teaser.

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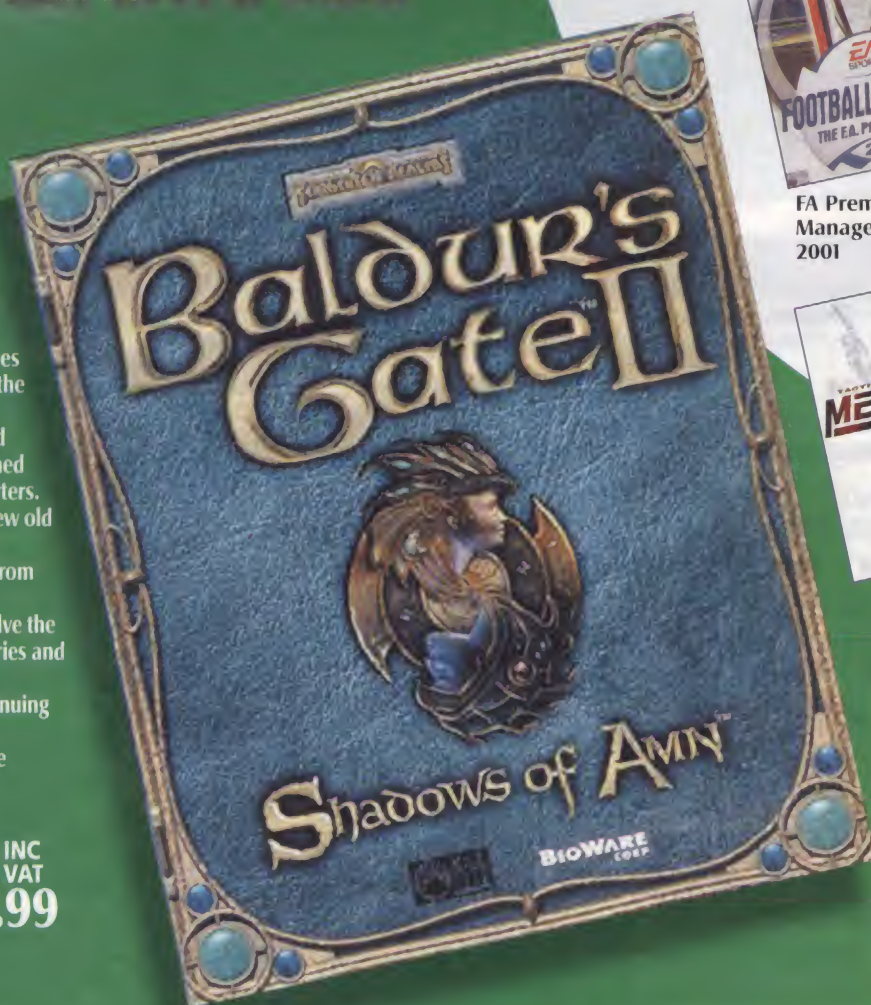
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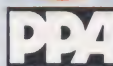
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THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED



In the year 2000, the Internet has become part of everyday life. Everyone's surfing, spending more money than they can afford at the latest e-tailer and making plans for the weekend via e-mail. Online gaming has also started to get the respect that it deserves, and some of the massively multiplayer games we've been talking about over the past couple of issues are jaw-dropping in scale

and ambition. Elsewhere, *Counter-Strike*, the free online phenomena is about to get a full retail release and we can see it growing and growing well into next year. This is just the start, though. Reading through this month's magazine, I'm convinced that things are really going to take off next year. In the Online section of the magazine, Richie has written a report about the first streaming game service, available through Gameplay to BT and FreeServe ADSL subscribers.

It points to a future where you'll be able to dial-up for games on demand, and also to a rather scary possibility whereby pay-per-play gaming could become the norm. Imagine the future. Huge plasma screen TVs mounted on the wall of your lounge, with the latest games ready to pump out for the 21st-century equivalent of the 10 pence piece. It's going to mean financial ruin for the lot of us.

Unfortunately, ADSL lines aren't the answer to all our problems. The technology is little more than another stop-gap solution, but it's definitely opening people's minds to the possibilities that lie ahead – and it's also becoming widespread enough for some of the big players to start pumping money behind new ventures. What I can guarantee is that as soon as high-speed connections become the norm, the shape of gaming is going to change forever.

On a lighter note, it's Christmas time. Well, almost. You can tell because the South of England is flooded and we're still about six months away from the first snowflake. You might still be drawing up the list for your Christmas shopping, but we thought we'd get in early with the first festive gift of the season, so on the front of this magazine you'll find two CDs packed with the latest demos, including four exclusives and a massive 650Mb *Icewind Dale* epic. Well, it's better than a pair of socks.

Dave Woods
Acting Editor



“What I can guarantee is that as soon as high-speed connections become the norm, the shape of gaming is going to change forever”



God help the poor sod who tries speeding in this town.

CLANK THE MONKEY WITH... MECHCOMMANDER 2

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Inhouse

PUBLISHER Microsoft

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2001

WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/games

IN SUMMARY

Like the man says, "a real-time tactical game, with real-time strategy". Somewhere between a mechanised *Myth II* and *C&C* with brains. Plus multiplayer support for up to eight players or eight teams.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The gameplay comes with the full BattleTech seal of approval and the 16-year pedigree that goes with that. It's trying to shift attention away from the tedious tank rush of most real-time games to a more involving tactical challenge. And the robots are cute as a button.

Go ahead punk, Mech my day.

OK, OK, we're sorry...

★ **FIRING AWAY** Elvis Bacon

➡ **Speedy Mechs** recon types.





Testing the new Stretch Armstrong laser gloves.



Look out! He's firing genetically-modified cottonbuds.



One day, the littlest fat helicopter knew he'd be famous and all the robots would love him. Aw... how touching.



Press a button on the big guy's back and rockets come out of his chest. It could be worse.



Reinforcements, repairs and some much-needed lubrication for the troops.

From a BattleTech universe that's almost old enough to have legal sex, *MechCommander 2* will be the latest miniaturised stomping ground for the giant robots. And with Jordan Weisman – FASA's (the BattleTech board game people) founder – now creative director in Microsoft's games division, the hope is to create something more in keeping with the board games than previous computerised efforts. The game will stick closely to BattleTech storylines so, as a mercenary Mech commander, you'll fight for three powerful noble houses in the Inner Sphere, caught up in a vicious battle to change the balance of power in the Chaos March region of space. A lot of store is being put into evolving the storyline within the game, but we won't know a great deal about that until it has, ahem, evolved. Weisman describes *MC2* as "a squad level real-time tactical game,

with real-time strategy". Your command post will be an orbital carrier from where you despatch roving squads of Mech mercenaries wherever they are most needed, before zooming – smoothly – right down into the thick of the action at ground level.

The key thing is that you won't just be fighting individual battles (30 missions, to be pedantic), it's an

"It's easy to get blasé about visuals these days, but there's no escaping the fact that a throbbing great chunk of *MC2*'s charm lies in the graphics"

ongoing, persistent campaign. Subject to the overall strategic situation, you may need to bring in repair units or mine-laying Mechs, send down reinforcements, or even call in air strikes to stave off defeat in a crucial sector.

Once you're on the ground, though, it's about making every Mech count. This is a squad game

not a build, hoard 'n' rush real-time affair, and you only have up to 12 Mechs per mission. The idea is to develop individuals from rookies to 30ft iron-assed veterans, and equip them for specific roles within a squad. If you don't conserve them, they won't be fit to fight in later missions – if a Mech's arm gets blown off, you either buy him a new set for later missions or start calling him Stumpy.

The gameplay will try to emphasise cunning and a spot of invention. You'll be using sensors, probes, captured enemy equipment, and – of course – the 3D terrain to your advantage. It's line-of-sight rather than fog-of-war based (to emphasise the tactical rather than the strategic), so you will be able to use this to capitalise on your Mechs'

abilities to blast through walls, jump over cliffs and kill dangerous trees. Once you've battered the enemy AI into submission, there will also be eight-player and eight-team multiplayer modes, plus a mission editor to tinker with.

MC2 has the promise of being a delightful tactical headache when it ships next year, but there's one aspect of the game we haven't talked about as yet – the look of the thing. It's easy to get blasé about visuals these days, but there's no escaping the fact that a throbbing great chunk of *MC2*'s charm lies in the graphics. Gone are the murky textures and fuzziness we've come to associate with units in real-time games ever since they went 3D – these tiny Mechs are pin-sharp, with a definition and level of detail that harks back to the best days of sprite-based animation. Cute might seem an inappropriate way to describe things that are supposed to be 100-ton death-dealing tin cans, but cute they bloody well are. **[CZ]**

TOP STORY



The missions are set in all manner of places. Look, there's a tree in this one.

BEAM OFF TO NEW CIVILISATIONS WITH...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Reflexive Entertainment
PUBLISHER Activision
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE 2001
WEBSITE www.activision.com

IN SUMMARY

A squad-based game in which you command a Special Forces section of Starfleet who specialise in dangerous stealth-based missions. Each character in your team has skills you'll need to use to complete the levels, which take place on Klingon planets and Borg cubes.


WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Voyager: Elite Force has instilled new confidence in *Star Trek* games and we haven't seen a good squad-based title for a while. *Commandos 2* will probably be better, but if you're a Trekkie or sci-fi fan, transporters, phasers and all manner of gadgets could swing this your way.


STAR TREK: AWAY TEAM

Star Trek meets Commandos. You know it makes sense. Or does it?


★ **REHASHING INTROS** Mark Hill




The team will arrive at their destination in the USS Incursion, the very latest in Starfleet technology and it possesses a great cloaking device that also allows it to disguise itself as another ship.




He's either trying to hit him on the head with a tennis ball or throwing a grenade.




It's like *Counter-Strike* in third-person. Not that we're obsessed or anything.




A visit to a Klingon world goes horribly wrong.




Look at those skills. It's almost like *Champ Man*. Not that we're obsessed or anything.




Pausing the game will give you time to think your actions through.



The tiny graphics allow for lots of detail.



"Lower the shield or I keel you, Starfleet scum."



And this is the beaming room.

We've accused some developers in the past of shoe-horning the *Star Trek* licence into established genres to create a quick and easy, if not always very good, hit. They've done it with *Birth Of The Federation* (Master of Orion turn-based strategy), *Armada* (traditional RTS), *New Worlds* (3D RTS) and, more successfully, with *Voyager: Elite Force* (straight-forward FPS). As you may have figured out for yourself after looking at the screenshots, *Away Team* borrows heavily from the likes of *X-Com*, *Jagged Alliance* and, in particular, *Commandos*. In the game you can select a team from a pool of 18 characters with individual characteristics, it has an isometric viewpoint and you can pause the action at any stage to issue orders at your leisure. It's all been done before but, as *Elite Force* has shown, that's no reason for it to fall flat on its face. In

fact, *Away Team* is looking supremely polished. Taking a leaf out of the *Voyager* book, Reflexive Entertainment has created a Special Force similar to the *Elite Force* from Raven's game. This team is sent out on the most dangerous missions, when diplomacy has failed and combat is almost inevitable. That doesn't mean it's a violence-packed, tactical warfare game. *Au contraire, mon capitaine*, there will be as many adventuring puzzle elements as there will be

“There will be as many adventuring puzzle elements as there will be combat, and your teams must uphold Starfleet protocols at all times”

combat, and your team must uphold Starfleet protocols at all times. In addition, one of the *Away Team*'s main priorities is to approach all its missions stealthily. Enemy soldiers have a line of sight, which you can toggle like you did in *Commandos* to find out whether you're in their view

range, and sound metres to let you know how much noise you're making.

Each of the officers in your squad has an area of skills in which they specialise. So, for example, you'll have snipers, demolition experts and hackers, each of them useful for particular missions. Certain levels will require you to keep members of your team alive, but generally you won't suffer any

penalties for losing an officer, other than the obvious disadvantage of having less characters to choose from. Missions will involve rescuing idiotic diplomats, sabotaging terrorist facilities and keeping the peace. But the most exciting thing about them is that, unlike in *Commandos*,

there is no one way of completing them. Depending on the approach you take there can be different outcomes. The Next Generation touch will be improved by the voices of Brent 'Data' Spiner and Michael 'Worf' Dorn, both actors who have struggled to make an impact outside the series and who are becoming regulars in the voice talent credits of *Star Trek* games. No date has been set by Activision for release, but with so many *Trek* games either out or in the offing, *Away Team* should be one of the few to stand out from the crowd. [A]

BAFTA WAY I LIKE IT

NEWS EDITOR Mark Hill



Anyone concerned with the status of computer games in both the media and the

public eye has cause for celebration this month. The best game of the year bar none has won the prestigious BAFTA award for best PC game, despite not being quite as commercially successful as a host of other titles we could mention. Probably the first computer game to really open up the possibilities of the PC game format, it makes a refreshing change to see it widely acclaimed rather than lost without a trace. Unfortunately, the BAFTAs don't seem to have as much weight as they used to. But would it be any better if there was a gaming equivalent of the Cannes Film Festival or the Booker Prize? After all, this is an entertainment industry as riddled with politics, commercialism and lack of integrity as any other. We'd only end up seeing the same old tired routines backed-up by the big money houses winning it year in and year out. The real challenge is seeing whether the next-generation consoles can deliver the goods promised, and bring titles of the standard of *Deus Ex* to a wider audience. The debate about the consoles killing off PC games is completely misguided, since one of their features (particularly Microsoft's Xbox) is the ease with which they can be ported over. Let's not kid ourselves, big console titles sell astronomically more than PC ones, which means a lot more time and money can be spent in their development. From an optimistic point of view, the capabilities of the new consoles should mean we get games that are worth porting over rather than the substandard PSX quick-cash rubbish we get fobbed off with at the moment. And if all this seems too utopian, remember at least that *Blam!*, a new high-profile TV games programme on at a reasonable time, is set to launch on Sky. Who says we're a bunch of cynics, heh?

TECHHEAD

The latest and greatest hardware news

P28



THE PCZONE CHARTS

What's in, out, up and down

P30



ChartTrack

BOFFO BRITS BLITZ BAFTAS

UK teams do well, but *Deus Ex* takes top honours

The prestigious (and somewhat intimidatingly up-market) BAFTA Interactive Entertainment Awards ceremony was held recently at London's Royal Lancaster hotel, and it was a night of great triumph for British developers.

Alongside the factual, educational and artistic awards, gaming gongs were given out for best PC, console and sporting titles, along with awards for best use of visual and audio. The overall winner in the PC category was *Deus Ex*, whose prestige and respect among the gaming community has now risen so high it could be used to look down on Mount Everest. Ion Storm's Warren Spector, the brain behind *Deus Ex*, spoke of his satisfaction: "Winning the BAFTA for PC Game Of The Year is just unbelievable. What makes the award especially meaningful is that, during development, we didn't really know how people would respond to what we were doing. The *Deus Ex* team worked hard to give players an experience unlike any they'd had before. Finally, thanks go to all the *Deus Ex* players around the world who voted, in their own way, for a new and different kind of gaming experience."

The runners-up were top strategy title *Shogun* and, somewhat inexplicably,

Ground Control. Meanwhile, Attention To Detail took the prize for Best Sporting Game with *Sydney 2000*. British teams also scored highly in the console arenas with *Rage* taking the Best Moving Images award for its N64 hit *Perfect Dark* and Sony Cambridge's *Medieval II* winning the award for Best Console Game.

In the more specialist categories, Bullfrog (or what's left of it) scooped the award for Best Use Of Sound with *Theme Park World*, closely edging out *Thief II* (our personal favourite) and the Gameboy version of *Cannon Fodder*.

Away from our home victories, the world of PC gaming also scooped the Best Music category, with the winner *Imperium Galactica II* showing that a good dose of classical scoring is far more pleasing than the techno/pop hit sounds of *FA Premier League Football Manager* and the tinkly-tonk kiddie nonsense of *Theme Park World*.

This was the third BAFTA ceremony to be held since Interactive Entertainment was recognised as having artistic merit, and it was hosted by *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* star Phil Jupitus. Among the panel of judges were industry luminaries such as Peter Molyneux and Jez San.



Eidos chairman Ian Livingstone holds the coveted award.

MAN WHO KNOWS

The latest industry gossip

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THE LATEST ON...

Call Of Cthulu, Empire Earth, Obi Wan and more...

P.35



HOTSHOTS

Rev up your engine and get ready for some rally action Colin McRae style

P.38



Valleys, canyons and hillsides all play a big part.



Bloody cowboy builders.



How not to avoid an ambush.



Centreparks unveil its new attraction.



Weekly shoppings get dangerous.



This will be the green level then.

NAME CHANGE FOR Z2

The Bitmap Brothers create a franchise in one fell swoop

Some time ago we brought you news of The Bitmap Brothers return to PC gaming in the shape of Z2, the sequel to the popular, but under-performing action strategy title most fondly remembered for a pair of head-banging robots called Brad and Alan. Things went a bit quiet recently, but we've learnt the Wapping-based team has been juggling with a new name for the project.

Any particular reason for this move? "Well, Z2 doesn't sound that good, does it?" confides a tired sounding Mike Montgomery, CEO of the Bitmaps. "No, we wanted the game to be recognised as 'Z'. Plus we wouldn't be able to call the next one Z3 because BMW has got all the trademarks on that name." So instead, and thinking admirably long term, they've gone down the old franchise route regarding naming and Z2 has become Z: *Steel Soldiers*. "Z's about robots not humans," says Montgomery, "Brad and Alan are still there, so is Zed, plus a few new characters. The humour's still there. That's what makes the difference between Z and other strategy games. It's slightly different to before, a bit darker, less 'Bill and Ted'."

Z's humour caused a bit of a problem for the Bitmaps in America, mainly since none of them quite 'got it'. "Hopefully, they'll understand better

this time. It's a bit odd actually as the two guys that do the voiceovers for us are American, and if they can get the humour, why can't the rest of the country get it?" laughs Montgomery.

"We're more action-orientated than most, a bit more arcadey. Much more into blowing up stuff, fighting and all that stuff, rather than all that standing around building up the biggest army in the world." All the good stuff, basically.

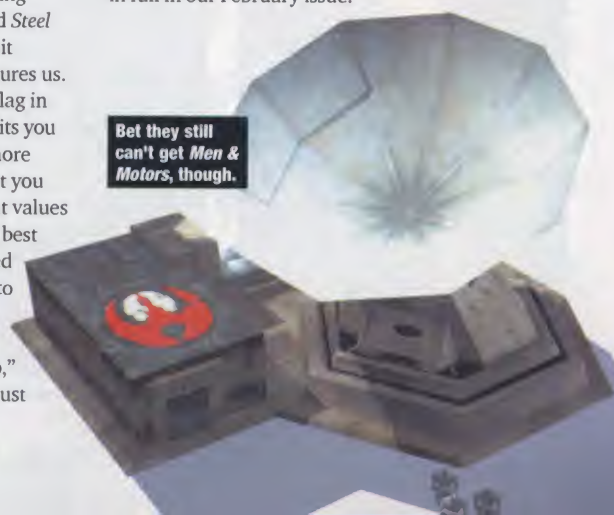
Not to say there isn't a certain amount of building involved. The original game had you controlling certain areas of the map to gain resources and *Steel Soldiers* refines this concept. "We've changed it slightly, but it's still simple," Montgomery assures us. "It's still territory based, but you now have a flag in each territory that shows you how many credits you get per minute. The more flags you get, the more credits you have. But that also affects how fast you can build units." Different areas have different values so it's up to you to decide which locations are best suited to your plans. All this has to be balanced with the game's 3D landscaping, forcing you to choose between tactical positioning or resource-rich areas.

"We want people to really explore the map," explains Montgomery. "We don't want them just

staying in small areas and seeing only, say, 75 per cent of each one. The resource areas are spread out across the whole level. We put a lot of effort into them and we want people to see it all. Sometimes you can play these strategy games and complete them without ever seeing half of the map."

Release is scheduled for spring next year, but the team are about to enter the Alpha stage as you read this. We'll be bringing you a full preview, and attempting to explain that 'simple' resource system in full in our February issue.

Bet they still can't get *Men & Motors*, though.





Last year's qualifiers were looked after by a few Gladiators.



One of the Brits in Dallas last year.

CASH FOR QUAKE

Fancy winning a share of US\$100,000? Frag on...

After the huge success of last year's professional CPL Quake III competition held in the USA, which boasted a whopping prize fund of US\$100,000, we're happy to announce that the UK qualifiers for the next one are nearly upon us. Held at The Playing Fields in London (www.theplayingfields.co.uk) on Sunday December 3, and offering a prize fund of £5,000, you'll be able to pit your wits against the best Quake III players in the country in a bid to gain entry to the finals in the US, as a representative of your two sponsors, PC ZONE and AMD. Not only will we pay for your flight and accommodation out there, we'll also give you £750 spending money, so all you have to worry about is winning.

The qualifier will involve 64 players, the top 20 from last year's competition, 20 highly respected players selected by the Quake III community, and 24 wild cards, which can be applied for via The Playing Fields website. And, in the great tradition of the British quiz show, no one will go home empty handed either, as even first round losers will walk away with at least £30 each, proving that this will be the first truly professional tournament ever.

As for the final itself, it'll be held between December 14-17, 2000 in Dallas, Texas, USA, where approximately 512 competitors from around the world will battle it out for the title of world champion and a lion's share of the US\$100,000 prize money. Also, Channel 4 will be filming a half-hour documentary about the qualifiers and the final in the US, so if you are the lucky winner, you might even find yourself becoming a national TV star. So apply now before it's too late.

BLAM!!! BLASTS ONTO SKY

A brand new primetime TV show – the gods have been listening.

Arriving just too late for last month's TV show feature is a new Gameplay.com produced programme called *Blam!!!* (don't blame us for the excessive exclamation marks), running for 13 weeks on Sky One from November 4.

Hosted by some blonde called Julia Reed, the show promises to cover everything in the world of games – news, reviews, previews and the like – along with weekly challenges in the old Gamesmaster mould. These include regular European play-offs between the UK, France, Germany and, for some reason, Sweden.

Viewers can also access the show through its website

(www.gameplay.com/blam), voting in the weekly top fives, voting for the contestants *Big Brother*-style and generally waffling on in the usual over-opinionated, ill-informed nature of Internet gamers everywhere.

Naturally, being on Sky there has to be some sort of money-making spin to it. *Blam!!!*'s viewers are being encouraged to buy items seen on the show via Sky's Open TV shopping service or from Gameplay's website.

Tune into *Blam!!!* every Saturday at 12.30pm, with a repeat showing 10.30am on Sundays and, knowing Sky, every half hour thereafter until the end of time.



Julia Reed will be presenting the show.



Some of Europe's finest athletes in full stretch.

DESERT ISLAND GDS



We asked the *Startopia* developers, Mucky Foot, what games they'd take if they were marooned on a desert island with only a PC and an unlimited power supply. After much haggling, we also gave them an ultra fast modem connection (powered by monkeys).

★ MONKEY ISLAND SERIES (Blizzard)

This is quite a difficult choice really because Mike and Fin are on the island as well. Since you have very kindly supplied an ultra-fast modem connection (powered by monkeys), it would make sense to choose a good multiplayer game such as *StarCraft*. But as I'm by far the most inept games player on the island, I would become quickly demoralised and may develop cannibalistic tendencies. So I've decided to play safe and choose a game series that I enjoyed very much and that might also give me a few pointers in my new lifestyle: *Monkey Island*. (Gary Carr)



★ AGE OF EMPIRES II: AGE OF CONQUERORS

(Microsoft)
It's an old-style RTS balanced to perfection. Best of all, it has no flying enemies so building walls and defences actually has a point. I could idle away the hours challenging the world over my monkey powered high-speed Internet connection. But the real beauty is that not only am I having fun, I'm learning how to develop a civilisation from primitive beginnings into a mighty war machine, which should come in handy for taking on any local tribes people who might inadvertently wander into my base. (Mike Diskett)



★ COUNTER-STRIKE (Havas)

I think it's probably the only game I can beat the others at – well, without getting caught cheating. Including the level editor, it would surely keep me going until rescue. Also it would help in keeping the harmony going because I'm sure that we would eventually be at each other's throats. The question is who would we eat first? (Fin McGeachie)



COUNTER STRIKE

Violent gaming causes the world to fight back

While the BBFC continues to dip its toes into the waters of videogaming in this country, elsewhere in the world the anti-violence lobbies are taking a far more pro-active role. Malaysia recently passed a law outlawing all gaming and video arcade centres across the country, claiming a corrupting influence on the nation's youth.

China has also apparently followed suit, with the city of Guangzhou shutting down some 1,500 amusement centres, although officials claim this is to encourage children to study more instead of wasting time playing games, rather than due to concerns with illegal gambling or organised crime activity. Singapore, meanwhile, has already implemented stringent measures against violent gaming, including a ban on that most socially (ir)responsible of games, *Counter-Strike*. (How could they? - Ed.)

All this comes on the back of the US presidential race, in which both main candidates have been particularly vocal about the corrupting nature of videogames, with violent action titles coming under particularly heavy fire. Governor George W Bush recently went on record stating that computers and the Internet had the power to "turn a child's heart dark," calling for strict censorship controls on games and violent forms of entertainment. The Gore/Lieberman camp hasn't been much more supportive towards gaming, although Gore is at least staunchly pro-Internet (pretty much claiming to have invented it himself). In the meantime, Indianapolis has been forced to overturn a ruling requiring arcade owners to keep violent-themed games separated from more family-friendly titles, where possible cordoned off or behind curtains.

You can't help but wonder just how far this will all go before the issue burns itself out. Is this the beginning of the end for our beloved past time, or just another speed bump on the road to mass market acceptance?



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Strange to think it started out as a total conversion for Unreal.



You wait two hours for an Acerbus and then three come along at once.

DO THE RITE THING

Rites Of Acerbus shows that RPGs can look lush too

Like most developers these days, OMG-Games isn't afraid of sticking some very clear labels all over its games, making our job much easier in the process. *Rites Of Acerbus* describes itself as being an epic action/adventure/RPG. But, unfortunately, with every other game these days seeming to favour such categorisation (the other half going for some combination of strategy, real-time and, once again, role-playing), *Rites Of Acerbus* needs to offer something pretty special to stand out from the growing masses. The first, and most obvious, noticeable advantage it has over most of its

would-be rivals are its graphics. Since the RPG genre is riddled with sub-standard looks, generally in the name of gameplay, *Rites Of Acerbus* shines as brightly as any big publisher's blockbuster. Apparently, filmmakers such as Terry Gilliam, Tim Burton and Luc Besson influenced the visual style, which can only be a good thing. The setting is dark and slightly weird, and attempts to stray from the repetitive themes found in fantasy RPGs. The creatures will also bring a more original shape to the gaming landscape since OMG doesn't want to go anywhere near the standardised orc, ogre and other common races.

Since OMG is bringing the action/adventure tag along for the ride, you can be sure your place in the gaming world and how you interact with it will be much more hands-on. Somewhat unusually, the game started life as a total conversion for Unreal called *The Crest Of Dharim*. Perhaps this is the reason the story and background information is so comprehensive, having grown through the years. OMG is promising a plot rich in political corruption, mystery, humour and the good old battle between good and evil. As soon as we know when and by whom it's being published, we'll let you know.

DIVINE LIES

Walk this way... with a few twists and turns

Belgium isn't exactly famous for its games, but that's exactly where *Divinity: Sword Of Lies* is being developed. A traditional RPG in the vein of *Baldur's Gate*, *Divinity* doesn't try to mask its origins or target audience, speaking freely about orcs, dwarves and elves in its storyline. Predictably, the plot involves an untrustworthy sword and your efforts to either recover it or destroy it. In an attempt to make things more interesting, developer Larian Studios is promising all manner of twists in the story and a believable gaming world peopled by characters with their own motivations and ideas. The RPG side of things is pretty conventional, allowing your main character to follow the Way of the Wizard, the Way of the Warrior or the Way of the Survivor. The first two are self-explanatory, while the third includes four paths: thief, opportunist (both good descriptions of what a game journalist is), charmer and the path of lore (both good descriptions of what game journalists think of themselves). Larian Studios are still looking for a publisher, but the game should see the light early next year.



Don't expect too many original features in *Outforce*.



Harvest, build, attack. Harvest, build, attack. Great.

IN WITH THE OUTFORCE

Outforce treads familiar ground

At a time when we're bemoaning the lack of originality in games, complaining that nearly everything we see these days is either an RTS or an RPG, and demanding that some thought be put into new concepts rather than rehashing old ones, it comes as a refreshing change to find a title that spits in our face as forcefully as *The Outforce*. As unoriginal and conservative a real-time strategy as you're likely to find, *The Outforce* is a 2D overhead game that steals everything it can from the likes of *Red Alert*, *Total Annihilation* and *StarCraft*. There are three races battling it out to become top dogs, there are resources that you need to harvest and missions that we have seen countless times before. That's not to say it won't be any good. If developer O3 can pull it off with enough panache, there's no reason it can't compete with the best 3D RTSs making their way to the shelves. Although it should be finished by the end of the year no UK publisher has been found yet.



Divinity looks about as bearded-weirdy as games get.



No, you haven't seen anything like it before, not even in your wildest dreams.

RUNAWAY SUCCESS?

Old-skool adventures may be running for their lives, but here's one willing to make a stand

The long debate about the state of adventure games is about to be rekindled by *Escape From Monkey Island*, the latest of Guy Threepwood's adventures, and which we should be reviewing in the next issue. After a long drought, the following months also see the release of *Stupid Invaders* and *Simon The Sorcerer 3D*. The interest is not only in the quality of the titles (*Monkey Island 3* was a huge disappointment), but also their success at the charts. Failure to make the publishers some money really could spell the end for the genre. It's in this charged atmosphere (oh, come on, humour us) that we take a look at *Runaway: A Road Adventure*. Although the screenshots suggest a kinship with the *Broken Sword* series, developer Pendulo Studios, hailing all the way from Spain, say they're trying to recreate the spirit of the original *Monkey Island* games. The game isn't trying to masquerade as an action/adventure, which makes a refreshing change, but instead concentrates on good dialogue and good puzzles. At the same time, Pendulo is working on an updated interface (*Monkey Island's* was brilliant, but looks a tad clumsy now) and getting the most out of today's machines. Like all the greatest adventure games (Lucas Arts' games in particular), *Runaway* is littered with references to modern culture, especially films. Since the subtitle is *A Road Adventure*, we expected the likes of *Thelma And Louise*, *Badlands* and *Easy Rider* to provide some inspiration, instead the developers mention titles such as *Pulp Fiction* and *Priscilla, Queen Of The Desert*. Puzzles featuring drag queens shooting up heroin in the desert and washing bits of exploded head from the inside of a camper van sound very appealing. *Runaway* has been in production for more than two years, so we're hoping a publisher will dignify it with a release on these shores in the not too distant future.



Runaway should join the other great Spanish adventure games. Like... err...



Could this game look any more like Broken Sword?



It might be taking *Monkey Island* as its template, but *Runaway* doesn't look very funny.



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INSIDE GAMES

SCREENSHOTS: THE ART OF GAMES

Caught between debates of violence and a profit-driven industry, games are still seen as a superficial form of entertainment. As an art exhibition borrowing its style from *The Sims* opens, Mark Hill considers the cultural significance of games



This picture of the Cuban kid Eilan Gonzalez, the subject of a big dispute between Fidel Castro and the US, is the closest in style to *The Sims*.

Despite the best efforts of a few enlightened journalists, videogames are still considered worthless by both the unwashed, unthinking masses and the close-minded, conservative cultural establishment. At best, games are empty forms of entertainment that provide a simple-minded amusement and help children develop their hand-to-eye coordination. At worst, they are evil devices capable of washing your brain and making you more stupid, violent, fat and generally unhealthy. These were also the lines generally used against cinema, another new, technological form of entertainment – over a hundred years ago. After a few decades, though, films were widely accepted as a form of entertainment that every sector of society could enjoy, while at the same time being recognised as potential works of art.

In the last few years, games have made huge steps to reach the commercial standards set by big Hollywood

blockbusters, with titles like *Tomb Raider*, *Final Fantasy* and *Half-Life* establishing themselves as spectacular diversions and making huge sums of money along the way. But while the games industry might be busy planning the next *Titanic* or *Nutty Professor 2*, where are our *Citizen Kanes*, *Godfathers* or *Raging Bulls*? Will there ever come a day when we start talking about the latest French art-house game? When university courses study the semiotics of RPGs? When school children are taken to museums to see the paintings of Rubens and Velazquez and made to play the works of Shigeru Miyamoto and Warren Spector?

There's no denying the fact that videogames are still in their infancy. The form is still too obsessed with technological advances and still developing its own unique language. In many ways, we are still at the 'throwing custard pies at people's monochrome faces, showing the dialogue in big black boards that cut up the scenes to the accompaniment of a tinkering piano' stage. But there's also no denying their

WHO CAREYS?

The Sims are not only making it into art, they're also making guest star appearances on dross American sitcoms. During one scene of *The Drew Carey Show* recently screened in the States, the characters started speaking in the Pingu-like language of *The Sims*. Apparently, Drew is a big fan of the game.



It *Sims* like Drew's a bit of a games freak.



The incident that sparked some of the biggest riots in Los Angeles: the beating of Rodney King by the LAPD.



Oswald's murder is central to America's psychology. Was it all a conspiracy?

power to tell a story like no other form of fiction can (through interactivity), their visual impact or their capacity to shape reality at will. With such tools at their hands, it can't be long before developers become pretentious enough to attempt a playable work of art, and talented enough to pull it off. You could argue that we've already seen genuine works of art. *Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time*, *Deus Ex* or *Planescape: Torment* could all be examined for their artistic merits alone and come out as shining examples. The biggest problem is defining 'what art is' in the first place but, since that is a problem that still baffles the

Museum of the University of Arizona under the name of Screenshots, they gathered a whole new dimension of meanings. Hanging on the walls of a museum, the images suddenly make us question how games and their visual language influence our interpretation of the real world, and how events in the real world are interpreted for us by the media. When we spoke to Jon Haddock, he told us that is exactly what he had in mind. "I'd like people to think about the events and images we are shown by the media, how much they affect us, and what it means when those images are owned by a specific individual or company,"

“For all *The Sims*' shortcomings as an entertaining game, it is the best example of visual control and manipulation seen in any game to date”

greatest thinkers, we'll leave it for the aesthetic philosophers to work out.

The 20th Century put paid to the notion that art should be beautiful and beyond the realm of everyday experience. Cubism and expressionism are responsible for some truly ugly works and pop art used the most common things imaginable to make its case. These days a guy pissing on his bed counts as art as long as the bed is in the room of a museum, prompting the usual dismissal from the general public of modern art as a big waste of time. And it's likely they'd be just as dismissive of Screenshots, an exhibition of works by American artist Jon Haddock. Had Haddock's creations been released on the Internet they would have been viewed as a clever type of amusement. But as soon as they were shown in an exhibition at the Art

he says. He could have chosen a comic-book approach, or recreated the scenes in the style of Dali or a child's illustrations to draw our attention to the subject. That he chose the look of computer games says a lot about their status in the collective imagination and their relationship with more traditional forms of visual communication. "I used the isometric perspective and tiling to recreate the look of a classic computer game," says Jon, before adding that, "the popularity of *The Sims* was definitely one of the factors that led me to complete this project now."

In fact, *The Sims* is a perfect choice. For all its shortcomings as an entertaining game, it is the best example of visual control and manipulation seen in any game to date. Echoing the highly technological audio/visual culture we live in, *The Sims*



A particularly sensitive subject in relation to games: the Columbine High School massacre.



The death of Diana, shown through the tabloid's coverage of the crash.

allows you to manipulate artificial people with needs and emotions and to spy on their private and social lives. By using its style, the artist is given complete free licence to manipulate significant historical and cultural moments however he pleases.

But it isn't just a certain style used out of context that can be considered artistic, the games themselves have a lot to offer. Haddock explains that although "I don't play as much as I used to, or as much as I'd like to, I think the medium is very relevant. A good computer game is fine art. It produces all the reactions in its audience an artist

could hope for. I still dream about Heretic." He also suggests that perhaps games should concern themselves more with everyday life rather than extravagant sci-fi opuses. "I'd like to see a wider range of subject matter in games. For me the best part of any game isn't the action, it's the mundane living in between," he concludes.

We doubt whether Jon Haddock's ScreenShots will have an immediate impact on the way games are viewed. But it will be interesting to watch the development and media impact of games, such as *Black & White* and *Alice*.

THE TOP FIVE

Another highly biased list, this time it's for games with enough artistic merit to warrant praise from the more cultural press.



1 DEUS EX



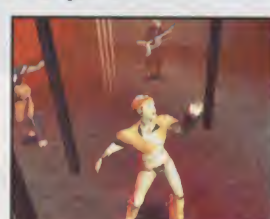
2 HALF-LIFE



3 PLANESCAPE: TORMENT



4 SYSTEM SHOCK 2



5 THE NOMAD SOUL

WASH AND GOLEM

Poland capitalises on free trade and enters the RTS arena

With the scourge of communism drifting ever further from the shores of eastern Europe, more and more software designers are emerging from beneath the old Iron Curtain. The latest to pop up, say hello and show us their wares is Polish-based Leryx Longsoft (not so much the name of a games company as a character from *Lord Of The Rings*) with its forthcoming real-time strategy title *V.O.T.E.R. Golem*.

Set in some far-off future, where the polar ice caps have melted and the planet has been engulfed by radiation following a catastrophe of some kind – the details are a little vague. As is usual in these radiation-global warming scenarios, mankind has been mutated into three races – magic-wielding humans, telepathic insect-based creatures and hyper-intelligent technology lovers. Among the more interesting spells are the powerful sounding *Wrath Of Gods* (a lightning storm) and the bizarre *Rat's Stinky Breath* (we're sure something is being lost in the translation).

All the usual RTS components are there – base building, resource management, tech research and big ol' scraps, with an emphasis on naval combat. But whether the three different races and the mixture of magic and technology will be enough to lift it above the rest of the RTS pack is yet to be decided. Leryx is hoping for a December release.



No, it's not a Lego set.



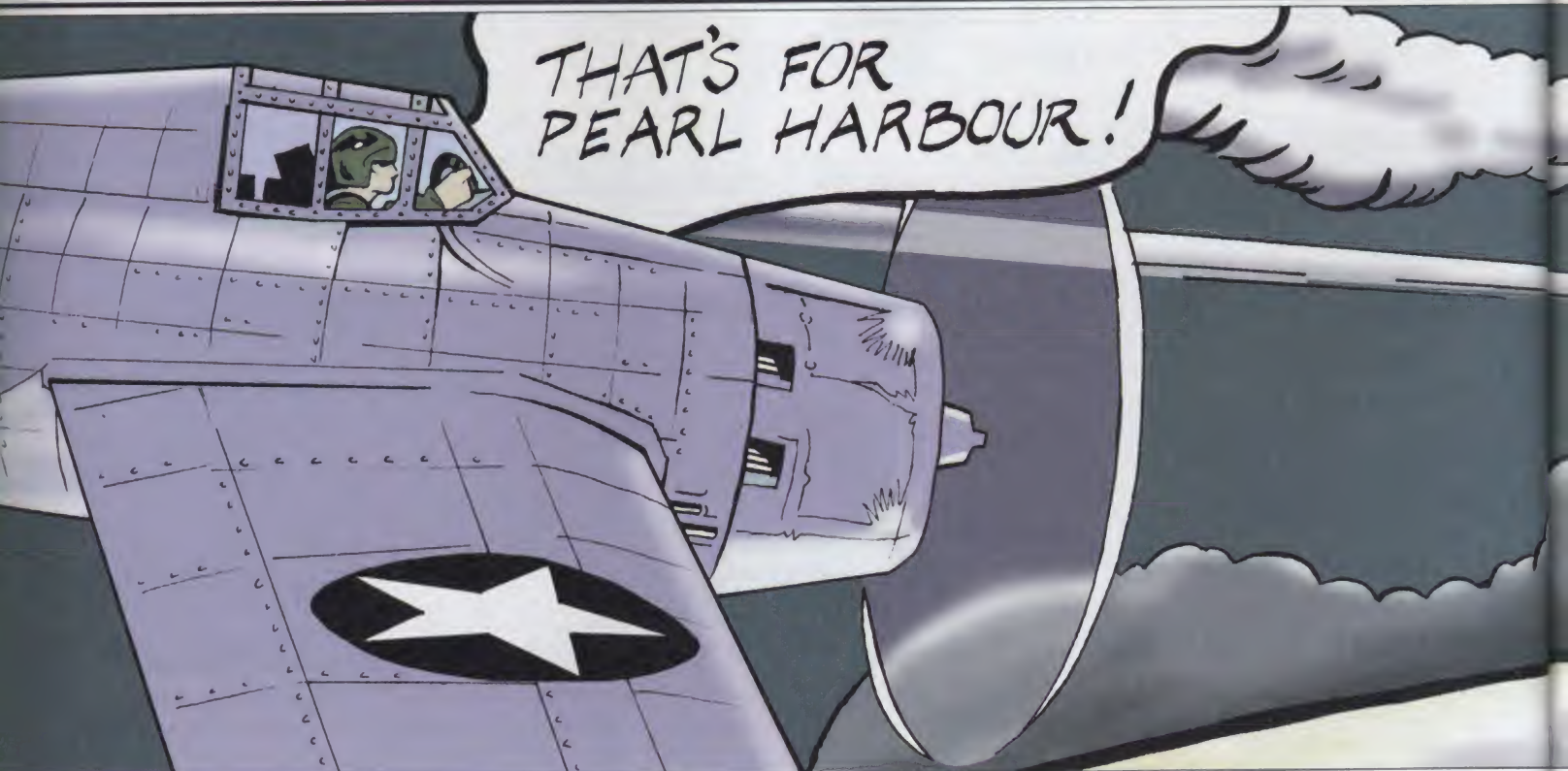
There is life after nuclear war, it's just green.



④ Nice artwork. Says bugger all about the game.

STARBRIGADE

Jumping four-square onto the current real-time, turn-based hybrid strategy game bandwagon come developers Iridon with *StarBrigade*. Little is known at the moment, but we believe the game will eschew modern 3D landscapes in favour of the traditional isometric 2D viewpoint. Also, judging by this sole piece of battle mech artwork, it's likely to have some sort of futuristic flavour with lots of heavy machinery lumbering about the place blowing seven chunks of hell out of each other. Makes a change. (No it doesn't – Ed.)



1942... THE BITTER REVENGE OF PEARL HARBOUR IS FLOODING THE PACIFIC... ROOKIES ARE NEEDED, FAST...



Nice house. Anyone got a match?

TZAR-ED AND FEATHERED

The *Charm Of War*, all the way from Russia

If there's one period of this planet's history that's been sorely neglected by the medium of computer gaming entertainment, it has to be ancient Russian mythology. How often have we sat there controlling the familiar Viking invaders, Roman legionnaires, ancient Celts or medieval kings and thought, "Not again. Why can't we have something based on Stribog, Russian god of wind, or something telling the tale of Veles, god of death?" (Never – Ed.)

Thankfully, Buka Entertainment is rectifying this with *Charm Of War*, a real-time strategy title with RPG leanings, based on those classic old Russian myths and legends you all fondly remember from your childhoods. Chosen by the Slavic gods to bear the titular talisman of eternal youth, you will do battle with mighty tzars, spell-casting wizards, tree-loving goblins and other assorted fairy folk.

You'll also be able to travel to parallel worlds (such as ones where this sort of thing actually makes some kind of sense to someone), recruiting armies as you attempt to restore the golden age of your land. So there.

SPACE CADET

Weird and wacky, it'll leave you permanently confused

Don't be put off by the shockingly bright screenshots. "M" the *Space Cadet* is an adventure game, one of those we keep telling you they don't make anymore and, for that reason only, deserves some attention. Similar in style to *Stupid Invaders*, *Space Cadet* shares the same *Space Invaders* theme and wacky humour. M, the weird character, crash-lands on a strange planet while playing the popular *Earth Invaders* game (confused yet?) and must find the missing parts of his spacecraft and some rocket fuel to get him home. Besides the usual exploration/puzzle-solving scenarios, developer Eclipse Software is also adding combat elements. How they will work God only knows, but we should find out next year.



Looks like you'll be spending most of your time being chased by green boars.



MISSIONS ARE REAL... AIRCRAFT AUTHENTIC AND BATTLES FIERCE... CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY

www.combat2.co.uk

Microsoft
Combat Flight Simulator 2
WWII Pacific Theater

TOPWARE SPECIAL REPORT

The makers of *Earth 2150* have a whole new line-up ready for next year

PROJECT MOON

Earth 2150 smashed onto the strategy scene this summer almost unannounced, sparking a heated debate as to whether it was better than *Ground Control*. Quick to capitalise on that success, developer Topware is lining up a sequel of sorts in the shape of *Project Moon*. The cynics among you may suspect that it's little more than an add-on pack that swaps planet levels for satellite ones, and you may be right. After all, *Project Moon* does take place at more or less the same time as *Earth 2150* did, and uses the same political background for the plot and a similar aggressive combat-oriented missions. This time, however, Topware is making a much wider range of options available to the player as well as including more ways of completing missions and stretching you for more creative solutions. A new map editor will be included with the game and promises to be an extremely powerful and easy way to create your own 3D real-time strategy levels. Anyone who enjoyed *Earth 2150* should be more than satisfied with the tweaks and improvements *Project Moon* offers, but we'll let you know when we review it in a couple of months whether it really is up to standard.



Well, we suppose it looks moonish.



But there's more to it than cratered ground.



Their mission: to drive over Saddam repeatedly.



Real world locations are rarely used in RTSs.

WORLD WAR III

There are literally hundreds of real-time strategies flying around at the moment, some of them on this very page, all of them set on alien planets, futuristic Earths, fantasy lands or historical pasts. Topware's *World War III* breaks the mould by doing something none of the others seem to have thought of yet: setting it in the contemporary real world. Not a real world where Russia has suddenly decided to take over the whole planet, or a real world where aliens have given Malta the most advanced arsenal in existence, but the real world you see in the papers every day. In an exaggerated version of the Gulf War, the plot sees an escalating conflict between the US, Russia and Iraq over oil turning into the bloodiest war in history. Each side will have a realistic arsenal, although, you will be able to research new technologies, and the 3D engine will feature real weather and day/night cycles. Currently scheduled for release next Spring.



The cockpit view rivals most flight sims, and the controls should be easier.



The third-person tank view is slightly less impressive.

TWO WORLDS

Described by developer Topware as a "third-person RPG/strategy game", *Two Worlds* looks remarkably like an adventure game. Set in the universe of Kroth, where every inhabited planet is surrounded by a cloud of dust and is unaware of the existence of its alien neighbours, *Two Worlds* has you playing a decisive role in the future of every living thing. As you wander around solving puzzles and using your psych-abilities (the game's futuristic version of spells, presumably similar to the ones in *System Shock*), you'll find out more of the titular world's mythology and history. In true RPG fashion, there are also loads of characters to meet and hundreds of sub-quests to complete. The battles are in real-time and promise to be action-packed – if only we could get a penny for every time we've heard that one. As with the other Topware titles there is no publisher as yet, but it should see the light before next summer.



You can talk to people to get puzzle clues.



There's lots going on here.

IRON DIGNITY

Topware clearly has a thing about the *Third World War*. *Iron Dignity* takes place in the year 2050, when the great powers are on the brink of a planet-wide conflict. The game takes the form of a *Battlezone* style of strategic warfare, where you control a selection of military units (tanks, aircraft and the like) and blow up the opposition. You can give commands to other units under your control, so it's not just a case of shooting everything in sight without a second thought. For better strategic planning, there will be a more traditional 3D RTS camera, so you'll always know what's going on around you. *Iron Dignity* should be out next spring.



The team's experience in RTS can be handy.

EARTH III

It might sound like some dodgy sci-fi TV mini-series, only fit to be aired on the more purulent of satellite channels, but it is in fact the third installment in the *Earth* series and the sequel to *Earth 2150*. If you're confused because you thought the *Moon Project* (featured on the opposite page) was the sequel to Topware's best-selling title, you'll be even more confused to learn that the game doesn't even take place on Earth. Since the planet is destroyed at the end of *Earth 2150*, the story follows the conflict of the three human factions that manage to flee and who continue their petty squabbles on Mars. In an effort to make the game more interesting, the humans (the Lunar Corporation, the United Civilized States and the Eurasian Dynasty) make peace and join forces to make the red planet the new home for humankind. But, since you can't have an RTS without some well-defined enemies, *Earth III* introduces some rather nasty aliens who not only disagree with the humans' rights to colonise Mars, they also enjoy using their bodies as raw industrial material. Playing the game will involve keeping these aliens at bay, while at the same time attempting to tame the new planet with terraforming and resource gathering. Some of the new features that will be introduced are subterranean battles (you can even build underground fortifications) and an upgraded vehicle constructor. *Earth III* isn't due until the end of next year, so you can consider *The Moon Project* as a stepping stone, (both commercial, narrative and technological) in the series.

TOPWARE
SPECIAL REPORT

That better not be Sisko's haunt.



It'll take more than a poxy little spaceship to colonise Mars.



The artwork shows a more ambitious project for Topware.

Gripping stuff

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SIDEWINDER
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www.forcefeedback2.co.uk

Microsoft

CHILDREN OF THE NEVOLUTION

Prepare to have your preconceptions blown apart by *Shadows Of Reality*

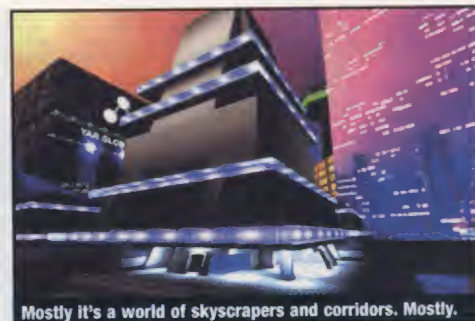
From the 'unsigned, but not for long' files, comes a promising System Shock/Deus Ex-style first-person RPG called *Shadows Of Reality* – a futuristic tale of mega corporations, dark conspiracies and cyberpunk technology.

The developer Nevolution is using the Unreal Tournament engine to create its *Blade Runner*-style metropolis, and is making some grand boasts about the game, claiming it will "shatter what you thought you knew about computer games, breaking down everyone's assumptions of what gaming should be." That's nice.

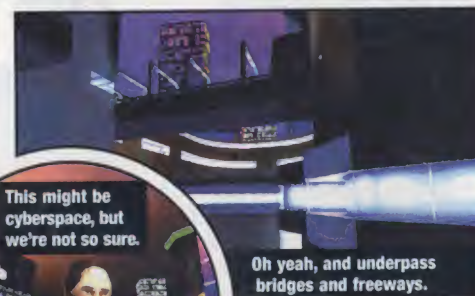
The story takes place in 2087, where an innocent employee of the YAR Corporation finds himself

embroiled in a labyrinthine plot of power, corruption and technology. Set primarily in the newly built city of North Cal, you'll be taken from the urban jungle to the ruins of old San Francisco as you attempt to unravel the truth about what's happening to you. Nevolution is also promising the first true depiction of Gibson's cyberspace in a game, with 'The Grid' as it's called, taking up more than 50 per cent of the game. This will be supported by a "cyberpunk soundtrack", which we're choosing to believe mean lots of Hawkwind mixed with a dose of Shakespeare's *Sister*, but probably means Jean-Michel Jarre and Philip Glass.

Characters are driven by dozens of sub-quests, with NPCs all having independent lives and backgrounds. Players can choose any career path they like, by using 'The Grid' to download skills and experiences. Originally planned as a massively multiplayer online game, Nevolution has been forced to scale back and concentrate on the single-player game in order to woo a publisher. Everything we've seen of it so far shows a massive amount of promise and we can only hope this gets snapped up by a major player soon. We'll keep you informed if and when it does.



Mostly it's a world of skyscrapers and corridors. Mostly.



This might be cyberspace, but we're not so sure.

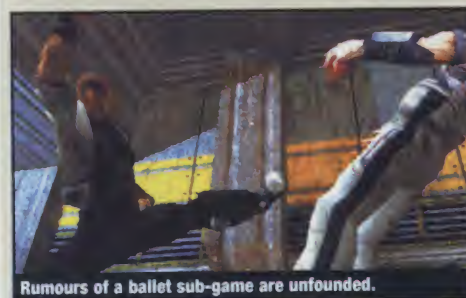
Oh yeah, and underpass bridges and freeways.



Deep space or some uninhabitable shithole in the Midlands?



That might be a foul.



Rumours of a ballet sub-game are unfounded.



"Ehh, chill out, dude. This isn't Fight Club."

SWEDISH MEATBALLS

Blood, gore and the future of sport in *Blitz – Disc Arena*

Coming on like the bastard son of *Speedball*, *Tekken* and *Quake III Arena* (as unholy a ménage a trois as you could ask for) is *Blitz – Disc Arena*, a futuristic sports combat title from Swedish developer Southend Interactive.

As with all future sports, *Blitz* is bloody, violent and illegal. At least it was until the usual futuristic corporations saw the financial possibilities and took over the game. Players control corp-sponsored teams, whose goal is to enter each arena, grab hold of a large metal disc and hurl it through the opponent's goal. And if that means beating the crap out of the opposition team along the way, so much the better.

Combat provides the meat of the game, with a full range of punches, kicks, headbutts and charging moves on offer. Weapons, while not strictly permitted, will crop up occasionally. Illegal moves, such as they are, are punished

by having the offender's legs magnetically locked to the arena floor, conjuring up all sorts of revenge possibilities.

Back in this world, gamers will be able to play across eight-player networks or enter a global Internet ranking system. Skill points allow you to create specialised teams and bot-AI promises to be advanced enough to provide life-like playing styles. You'll even be able to create your own logos, with the developers actively encouraging the formation of clans.

Southend Interactive, originally made up of five part-time programmers from Sweden, quickly found that creating its own 3D engine from scratch was taking up so much time they made it a full-time enterprise. *Blitz* doesn't currently have a publisher, although the team is actively looking. Interested parties should take a visit to www.southend-interactive.com and drop them a line.



"When I finish crushing your nuts, you'll be deadmeat, pal."



"My Gawd, you're... you're beau-ti-fuuul."

AT DIRT TAKE COVER
YOU'RE MINE
RETURN FIRE
FOLLOW ME
COVER ME
QUICK, TAKE COVER
LET'S GET OUTTA HERE
SPEAK YOUR MIND

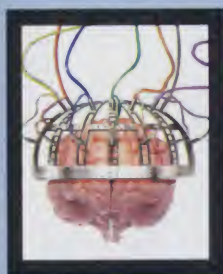
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www.gamevoice.co.uk

Microsoft



TECHHEAD

Microsoft dominates the news yet again with Windows ME and the impending Xbox

WORDS Carlos Ruiz

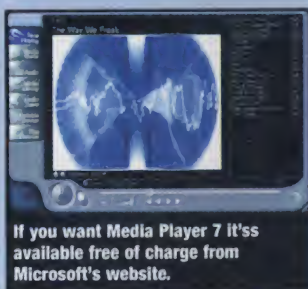
WIN ME OVER

How essential is Microsoft's latest home operating system?

Windows ME (Millennium Edition) has been eagerly awaited by many PC users for a variety of reasons, and was released to a baying crowd of enthusiasts on the stroke of midnight, September 14. But if you've not splashed out for the upgrade yet, should you bother?

A major pulling point for the new operating system is the inclusion of three key pieces of software: Internet Explorer 5.5 and DirectX 8.0 replace their previous counterparts and Media Player 7 aims to replace most (if not all) of your existing multimedia applications. However, all three are either downloadable or freely available on game and demo CDs.

Fast Boot ensures that powering up results in the desktop appearing within about 30 seconds, which certainly makes a change if you're used to



If you want Media Player 7 it's available free of charge from Microsoft's website.

Windows 2000 or a clogged-up Windows 95/98. System Restore, meanwhile, allows you to revert your system configuration to that of a time when your computer was working perfectly. Therefore, providing you regularly establish 'checkpoints', you can easily backtrack as soon as trouble occurs. You can also thumbnail picture files, and the extra components should also mean that home networking, the Internet and digital media are made more manageable.

You may already have guessed that Windows ME is not exactly an essential purchase – it will certainly please some people more than others. However, it will be fine for the foreseeable future, especially if you've 'topped it up' with the latest versions of IE, DirectX and the like, and you certainly won't experience any compatibility problems running the latest games.

Still, there are those who need the latest stuff at all times and, together with everyone buying a new PC this Christmas, they will form the vast majority of Windows ME owners. As usual, the upgrade package is selling for £80 and the full, install-from-scratch version for around £140. However, if you have Windows 98 or 98 SE, you can save money and buy the promotional upgrade (the one with the blue box) for a shade under £40. See www.windows.com for more details.

XBOX SHAPES UP

Microsoft's stab at a console now has an official name and upgraded specs

Somewhat surprisingly, Microsoft has decided that the Xbox will forever be known as... Xbox. Not the most exciting name in the world, granted, but seeing as people have been referring to the forthcoming PC console in this way for more than a year, changing the title would be a rather pointless and inefficient exercise.

Details regarding the innards of the new machine have been released and currently suggest a 733MHz Intel processor will be used. The specs also list 64Mb of DDR RAM, 8Gb of hard

disk space and a 5x DVD drive.

Obviously, these figures wouldn't seem too amazing in a standard PC, but in an integrated console such as the Xbox, would allegedly result in the ability to perform up to a billion operations per second.

Helping the Xbox achieve these staggering claims is NVIDIA, whose custom-designed 'GPU' video chip will run at 300MHz and deliver 200 million polygons per second. The graphics gurus are also trying their hand at developing the "most advanced

These are the unofficial mascots, apparently.



FACTCANNON

Even though Microsoft's Internet Explorer has firmly established itself as the most popular Internet browser on the planet, the Netscape series is still



trucking along. The 6.0 beta version has just been released, which boasts an improved, iMac-inspired blue interface, increased stability and Japanese support. Surf over to www.netscape.com for details.

After being suspiciously quiet for the best part of a year, and then releasing an



overhauled version of its G400 series, Matrox (www.matrox.com) is now ready to move back into contention for the 3D card crown. The new G800 looks set to use a multichip implementation similar to 3dfx's latest Voodoo cards, with processing capabilities of around 20 to 30 million triangles per second.

A team of bright sparks at NASA have used their know how of modern quantum physics to develop a new way of producing smaller transistors and



microchips. The new technique, which involves streams of light particles and entangled photons, will rewrite traditional methods of manufacturing, and provide the industry with a firm platform for upgrading in years to come.

The days of playing games on 2D monitors may be over within the decade, following news that Deep Video Imaging has perfected a 'dual-depth' 3D LCD panel. The unit consists of two screens, the first one being translucent so that the user can see both simultaneously. Despite the fact that they are both separated by less than five inches, they offer a true depth-of-field view. Everything you need to know, including how much they sell for, is at www.actualdepth.com



audio chip in the world" for the system, with four independent hardware processors pushing out DirectX 8.0 sound as well as the best trick audio effects, and all in Dolby Digital AC-3 surround-sound to boot.

Microsoft is clearly planning to put the Xbox head to head with PlayStation2 and Game Cube, but most PC owners are probably wondering how all this will affect them. The simple answer is that not many people know, although it seems likely that games designed for the Xbox could be easily ported to PC. If you want to know more, check out www.xbox.com – a very slick Website with just about all the official details you could ask for.



Don't worry, B-17 isn't crashing down.

B-17 NOT DELAYED

Rumours are circulating that MicroProse's flight-sim swansong, *B-17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth*, has been further postponed till next year. Well, word from Hasbro is that this is true... for our American cousins at least. For the UK and European market, the game should be taking up space in high street stores even as you read this – end of November. All of which, you'd think, would be good news. Except that the sceptical, suspicious and downright paranoid bunch that are UK games players (gawd love 'em) have been voicing concerns up and down flight-sim newsgroups and Internet chat forums at being used as unofficial 'bug testers' for the eventual US launch.

According to Hasbro, nothing could be further from the truth. A spokesperson tells us that the two main reasons for delay in the US are greater duplication and distribution numbers and the fact that Christmas isn't as much a prime sales period as Thanksgiving, which has already been missed. By delaying to January, Hasbro is guaranteed greater magazine coverage and in-store presence. So there you go. An insight into the secret world of games publishing dynamics. Who says we don't cover everything?

NOT-QUITE THE LAST NINJA

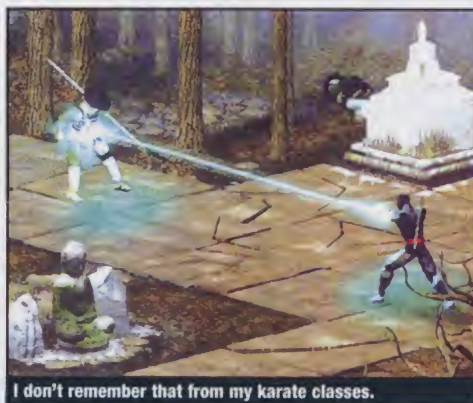
Get your swords ready for some hot ninja action

Old farts, bleary-eyed nostalgia freaks and all the rest of you losers who insist gaming died sometime around 1993 will no doubt be overjoyed to hear that the isometric fighting extravaganza *The Last Ninja* is making a return to our screens. The original series was widely regarded as a true C64 classic – partly for the unique multi-weapon gameplay, partly for the then ground-breaking graphical style, but mainly because it was one of the few games to successfully sneak shiruken past the watchful eye of the BBFC.

Studio 3 (nee System 3) is staying faithful to the original, retaining the same flick-screen gameplay and isometric viewpoint so beloved by

the fans. Although the level of detail included on each screen is promising to make full use of tomorrow's processing power. Your ninja chap will be fighting, sneaking and trading across almost 1,000 of these screens, fighting all manner of human and non-human enemies and mastering not only an array of different weapons, but also the ancient arts of ninja magic.

Being developed in conjunction with PS2 and Xbox versions, *The Last Ninja – Return To Lin Fen Island* is pencilled in for a winter 2001 release, although the team is hoping to have something on show by the next E3, which takes place in June.



I don't remember that from my karate classes.



I knew I should only have ordered half a lobster.

*It's more than real-time...
It's as real as it gets!*

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CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload, plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not



Sadly, there is no choice for a Millionaire class in Baldur's Gate II.

THE megastores TOP 10

OCT	NOV	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	BALDUR'S GATE II	BLACK ISLE	INTERPLAY	85%
NE	2	MIDTOWN MADNESS 2	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	84%
NE	3	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
NE	4	CRIMSON SKIES	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	82%
1	5	VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE	RAVEN	ACTIVISION	84%
NE	6	HOMEWORLD: CATAclysm	BARKING DOG	HAVAS	85%
6	7	DEUS EX	ION STORM	EIDOS	94%
NE	8	METAL GEAR SOLID	KONAMI	MICROSOFT	82%
2	9	AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE CONQUERORS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	79%
3	10	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%

THE TOP 10



OCT	NOV	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
NE	2	BALDUR'S GATE II	BLACK ISLE	INTERPLAY	85%
3	3	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
9	4	GRAND PRIX 3	GEOFF CRAMMOND	HASBRO	80%
1	5	AOE II: THE CONQUERORS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	79%
5	6	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
2	7	VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE	RAVEN	ACTIVISION	84%
NE	8	MIDTOWN MADNESS 2	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	84%
7	9	AOE II: THE AGE OF KINGS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	89%
6	10	DEUS EX	ION STORM	EIDOS	94%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 2000)

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"Deus Ex at ten and Who Wants To Be A Millionaire at number one? There's something seriously wrong here. Tip the charts upside down and keep Baldur's Gate II in its place for a real gamer's chart."

Gareth Lowndes, London

"Is the whole nation obsessed with Age Of Empires and The Sims? What happened to having games such as Half-Life at the top of the charts? And why has Elite Force slipped down so far after just one month? Sorry, I only have questions. If I had the answers I'd be a millionaire. And who wants to be one anyway?"

Jim Thorpe, Leeds

"Who Wants To Be A Millionaire is terrible, far too simple and it doesn't deserve to be number one. The only reason people are buying it is because they know the name. It's not even as good as it could have been given the format of the show. The Sims is the perfect example of a good game, nearly one year in the charts and still going strong. Voyager is rubbish and Deus Ex is far too hard."

Laura Stewart, Swansea

"If there was any justice in this world Deus Ex would be permanently perched at the number one position. They would devote whole pages of newspapers to it and the Education secretary would make it compulsory in the national curriculum. But then, if there was any justice, Chris Tarrant would be run over by a safe van on its way to the bank to deliver millions of pounds in unmarked notes."

Peter Tremain, Manchester

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

Charts always make a depressing read for anyone interested in the format. Anyone who loves films is usually physically sick at the trash that breaks box office records. The best-selling novels are often the trashiest. And any connection between good music and the singles chart is purely coincidental. And so it usually is with games. Deus Ex, the best game of the year, is only hanging on by the skin of its teeth, while the pile of commercial crap that is Who Wants To Be A Millionaire sits smugly at the top. We shouldn't be surprised. What do you think gets more TV viewers, Tarrant's game show or The Sopranos? Accept charts for what they are, the choice of the undiscriminating masses, and get on with playing the games that matter, like Baldur's Gate II and Voyager.

Mark Hill

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

- 1 Tiberian Sun (EA)
- 2 Grand Theft Auto 2 (Take 2)
- 3 Rogue Spear (Tale 2)
- 4 Driver (GT Interactive)
- 5 Championship Manager 3 (Eidos)

2 YEARS AGO...

- 1 Colin McRae Rally (Codemasters)
- 2 FA Premier League Manager 99 (EA)
- 3 Klingon Honor Guard (Hasbro)
- 4 Dune 2000 (EA)
- 5 Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines (Eidos)

5 YEARS AGO...

- 1 Command & Conquer (Virgin)
- 2 Championship Manager (Domark)
- 3 Rebel Assault (Virgin)
- 4 Need For Speed (EA)
- 5 Phantasmagoria (Sierra)

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:

QUESTION: In what AD&D universe is Baldur's Gate II set?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below.

- ✱ Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / Email / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18.
- ✱ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- ✱ Are you a current subscriber to PC ZONE?

Answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo (CPCZ0013A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: Wed, 13 December.

✱ Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Ed's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.



GRAVIS 



BE A CONTROL FREAK!

Imagine if you could control your life as well as you can control your gaming destiny with Gravis. Game pads and joysticks with the look, feel and power you crave but without the silly prices. Be a control freak – from just £7.99 to £35 – at [electronicsboutique](#), GAME and other game retailers.

Choose your own competition prize!

For full details of our control freak competition, pick up a leaflet at a participating retailer.

THEY WON'T SEE HIM,
THEY WON'T HEAR HIM,
THEY CAN ONLY FEAR HIM.



HITMAN

Codename 47

STARRING HITMAN: CODENAME 47 THIS IS AN UNRIVALLED CINEMATIC GAME WITH A PLOT TO MATCH. FEATURING A GROUND BREAKING 3D ENGINE, CREATING GORGEOUS CITIES WITH SUPERB ARCHITECTURAL AND SCENIC ACCURACY. TAKE PART IN A VARIETY OF MISSIONS EACH WITH DIFFERENT CONSEQUENCES. GAIN ACCESS TO THE BLACK MARKET TO BUY AN ARRAY OF WEAPONS, DECOYS, TRAPS AND PERSONNEL. A CUSTOM SOUNDTRACK THAT REACTS TO THE ADRENALINE LEVELS IN THE GAME. COMPUTER AI THAT WILL DEFINE THE GENRE OF THE 'THINKER SHOOTER'.

WAITING TO HAPPEN

With sequel after sequel being released and developers increasingly being forced to work on unabashedly derivative ideas, we take a look at some of the games we'd like to see made in the future. This month, **Mark Hill** demands that the best series of role-playing books ever written be turned into computer games

THE WAY OF THE TIGER

In 1985, when games were at an embryonic stage of development, there was still a way to experience superb single-player role-playing games: books. It might seem like a radical concept now, but there was a time when people actually read to have fun. The ball started rolling with Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson's *The Warlock Of Firetop Mountain* in 1982, and reached its pinnacle with Mark Smith and Jamie Thompson's *Way Of The Tiger* series. Armed with nothing more than a pair of six-sided dice and a pencil, you were drawn into one of the most impressively developed fantasy worlds ever conceived (Orb) to take on the role of a highly trained ninja battling evil. There are many reasons why the books (six of them in all) were so great, but the main one is the same reason *Deus Ex* and *Planescape: Torment* are such classics: the story.

Orb is a massive and astonishingly imagined and expertly described world, it has a credible and well thought-out mythology and it's full of well-developed characters (particularly your opponents). The fighting system, despite being hampered by the usual dice routine, made a great job of recreating unarmed combat, including punches, kicks and throws. You could also use shirikens, garottes, flashpowder, poison and any special items you had picked up along the way. You even got to choose special abilities (as you do in *System Shock 2* for example). Anyone who's read the books probably has some very strong memories of certain moments, such as infiltrating the lair of the ninjas in *The Way Of The Scorpion*; participating in a gladiatorial challenge against all manner of opponents;

poisoning Honoric by dropping a devastatingly powerful venom into his mouth while he slept, or fighting the followers of Vile in the ring of Vasch-Ro. Anyone who hasn't is probably wondering what the hell I'm talking about and is likely never to find out since they are hard to find. Which is yet another reason why a PC RPG should be made with today's technology. We imagine something close to the above mentioned *Deus Ex*, but in third-person mode and with the written narrative elements of *Planescape: Torment* to retain the spirit of the original. We spoke to the authors to see what they thought of the idea.

“We imagine something like *Deus Ex*, but in third-person mode and with the narrative elements of *Planescape: Torment* to retain the spirit of the original books”

“The trick would be to marry the background and the RPG elements with an interesting combat system that doesn't fall between the two stools of fantasy RPG and martial arts beat 'em up,” says Jamie, who is now part of British developer Black Cactus and is working on the story of their forthcoming *Warrior Kings*. Mark Smith, who has left writing in order to concentrate on business, reminds us that, a game was made in the '80s and was a big success on the C64, Spectrum and Amstrad. But, he says: “Given the possibilities the books offer, that game barely scratched the surface. Combat and adventure aren't the only elements *Way Of The Tiger* has to offer, either.”

The fourth book, *Overlord*, introduced a large section of government management, with council members you appoint to help you, spies, corruption and conspiracies, as

well as a host of economical and political choices. And if *Overlord* is a paper version of *Civilization*, the fifth book, *Warbringer* was a tactical combat simulator. You had armies that you needed to deploy and strategies you used in a very simplified version of *Shogun: Total War*. More surprisingly, it actually worked very well. To the question of whether he sees these aspects going into a game, Jamie says “adding the realm management and warfare might be possible, actually.” The main core of the game would have to be a massive RPG, though. Given the success of online games such as *Ultima* and *EverQuest*, we asked Jamie what direction he'd like to see the game take. “It would have to be a strong storyline for the single-player game, maybe doing two or three games in a series and then taking that online.

Doing a full online RPG like *EverQuest* could take many years, and a lot of cash. So, you'd have to build the engine and the world with massively multiplayer online in mind, but build it in a modular fashion, releasing 'single player RPGs' (but with limited multiplayer gaming, like *Diablo* or *Nox*) as you go along. This would build a fan base and enable you to get foundation technology and art in place. Kind of like *Ultima* did, although they didn't know they were doing it at the time!” Apparently, Black Cactus has plans to make an RPG in the near future and *Way Of The Tiger* is definitely a strong option. If your memories of the books are as fond as ours, contact them at www.blackcactus.com and convince them it's a good idea.



The books were brilliantly illustrated by Bob Harvey.

The Man who KNOWS

YADDA-YADDA-YADDA GAMES

Boffins at Cambridge University have been using *Quake II* to help them with their architecture course. Using an editor, detailed environments can be constructed, enabling buildings to be visualised in 3D. The resourceful eggheads turned to id's highly flexible engine primarily as a cost-cutting course, as it is considerably cheaper than standard architectural modelling software. Paul Richens, director of the university's centre for Architectural and Urban Studies, bragged: "We get slightly better results using a £30 game running on a £150 graphics card. So it really is extremely low-cost virtual reality." However, heads of department were concerned that the designs could be used to run about gleefully shooting people in the face and laughing maniacally as body parts exploded, and therefore ordered all guns to be removed. The miserable sods.

In further real-life crossover madness, the US Army is working on a top-secret computer game that is expected to replicate the experience of wholesale slaughter in the name of war. A spokesperson for the US Army said: "We are in negotiations to license a top-shelf game engine for our 3D game project. Employees will soon have an incredible opportunity to work on the industry's best next-generation framework. We're not able to discuss this partnership publicly yet – this version of the engine hasn't even been announced – but we guarantee this is a first-person shooter product with which you are very familiar."

On the subject of slaughter, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer, Richard Rhodes, has written a book, *Why They Kill*, that investigates claims about media violence. He concludes "there is no good evidence that watching mock violence in the media either causes or even influences people to become violent. There's some evidence that it makes people more peaceful."

On a much lighter note, Robbie Williams' *Championship Manager* addiction is spiralling out of control. He has publicly stated that it is his favourite game, and recently insisted on an early copy of the latest version to take with him on tour. The chubby warbler is apparently so smitten with the glorious game that he has requested a meeting with its creators, Oliver and Paul Collyer. I think that could quite easily be arranged if he could just get me an introduction to Anna Friel and Andrea Corr.



Not the most versatile of weapons.



Good to see the Bee Gees are still getting work.

RETURN OF THE MUMMY

Rebellion goes all *Tomb Raider*-y

Konami is gearing up for a November release of the gaming incarnation of lumbering bandaged-terror *The Mummy*. Based on the underrated 1999 film of the same name, *The Mummy* puts you in the shoes of foreign legionary Rick O'Connell as you fight off the evil Egyptian priest Imhotep and his army of the undead.

As in the film, you'll be accompanied by the simpering Rachel Weisz and the accident-prone John Hannah, both of whom have unique skills, which you'll need to make use of at different stages. Although how brain-frying terror can be fended off by wearing a skimpy dress or falling over at inopportune moments is unclear.

The Mummy features almost all of the locations, monsters and characters seen in the film and Konami is hoping that the *Tomb Raider*-style gameplay will manage to recreate the film's tension and atmosphere. Unlike Lara, O'Connell is much more adept at hand-to-hand combat and thinks nothing of slugging it out with several reanimated carcasses at once.

Designed by Rebellion (previously behind hits such as *Aliens Vs Predator* and most recently in the headlines for buying popular UK comic 2000AD), *The Mummy* is slated for a late November release and we should have a review next issue.

GREAT GAMING CLICHÉS

The games industry is littered with clichés and we're going to explore every one of them, even if it means exposing ourselves for the cheats we are

BEARDY-WEIRDY

Here's an idea for a game: Your father has just died, revealing on his death bed that he's actually only your step-father and that you are the son of a good king who was murdered. Now you must avenge him and regain your rightful throne, recovering the seven rings of Gunaark, the magic sword of Tholias or the twelve keys of Qwerty, thus

saving the kingdom from the evil wizard George. If you're a habitual peruser of the barren wasteland that are these Bulletin pages, you'll notice that a large percentage of games in development follow this plot line (or variations thereof) fairly closely.

The "beardy-weirdy" tag comes both from the recurrent facial mane worn by all the people who played

Dungeons & Dragons in the '70s (and still do) and from the abundant hair that flows from the jowls of many of the genres characters (wizened wizards and dwindled dwarves). Usually used to describe anything remotely connected with lands of orcs, mages, ogres and elves, it can also be a useful label to stamp on anything with a whiff of geekiness about it.



Which of these is more beardy, and which more weirdy?

THE LATEST ON...



CALL OF CTHULHU

We've had more details from Headfirst's upcoming terrifying first-person action/adventure/RPG. You'll be able to play the game as any of the four characters, each with their own skills and abilities (such as driving a car, understanding Latin, or having good weapon handling skills), depending on the style of game you're looking for. Whichever one you choose, however, the gameplay is firmly adventure rather than action oriented. In fact, your character has a psychological balance that can be altered by what he/she encounters in the game, presumably in a similar way to the humanity in *Vampire*. The release date has been tentatively set for Christmas 2001.



EMPIRE EARTH

One of the hottest strategy games we've seen in development, *Empire Earth* could make a big name for itself when it's published towards next summer. Developer Stainless Steel has now released more details about the engine, which was built from scratch as a zoomable fixed-camera able to support enormous random maps of different types of terrain. The special effects will be pretty spectacular and include nuclear explosions as befits a game aiming to revolutionise the *Civilization* type of games we've been seeing in recent years, adding an exciting real-time strategy element to the civilisation management.



OBI WAN

LucasArts has decided to postpone the release of this much-anticipated title, with the earliest date probably being sometime before spring next year. In the meantime, more details about the game are appearing. For those concerned that you'll spend all the game running around with nothing but a lightsaber, it will be welcome news to know that you can pick up grenades, blasters and even a Tusken Gaffi stick along the way. Also, in comparison to previous *Star Wars* games, which only supported four players in multiplayer, *Obi Wan* will support masses of people beating the Force out of each other.



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

It might have been conspicuous by its absence in the last six months, but 3D Realms has been working hard to make sure this is a *Half-Life* beater, going so far as to claim that it's "going to rewrite the book on what gamers expect from a 3D action game". Accomplishing that goal is the main reason why they refuse to give out any release dates just to see them inevitably slip. The main reason they are so confident about the game's greatness is that it has "unprecedented interactivity." Whether they include *Deus Ex* in the list of "unprecedented", we will only know when we finally get to play the game.



ANACHRONOX

After plumbing the depths of ignominy with *Daiikatana* and scaling the heights of success (both commercially and artistically), it will be interesting to see on which side Ion Storm's *Anachronox* falls. It might have been out of the spotlight lately, but work has continued apace on the ambitious RPG. Despite some reports that the game would be ready for Christmas, the development will continue well into next year, which isn't surprising given that the game uses the *Quake II* engine and will need a lot of work in order not to look outdated. Ion Storm believes that, like *Deus Ex*, it will be plot and character development that will drive the game anyway.



PRIVATE WARS

Readers wondering whatever happened to Russian-developed tactical sim *Private Wars* will be eager to learn that the designer, TS Group, has split the project in two. Due to the constantly advancing nature of technology, the team discovered that by the time they were ready to go Alpha, the early stages of the game were looking very patchy indeed. To combat this (and make up time on the already behind schedule title), the game has been split into *Private Wars* and *Silent Trigger*, a stealthy sniper version. The former will be extensively reworked, while *Silent Trigger* is to experiment with online 'episodic' distribution.

TICKERTAPE

STARTS++ Although the first game is still getting its own finishing touches, we've heard rumours that there are already plans for a *Severance: Blade Of Darkness* sequel. This seems a good indication of the confidence Rebel Act has in the success of their hack 'n' slash, but also of the marketing-led mentality of the industry. If everything goes according to plan we should be bringing you the exclusive review of the original next month. **++STOP++** Another sequel that's taken a little longer to make it into development is the one to 1991's *Scorched Earth*. Those of you around at the time will remember it as a fun turn-based game of artillery bombardment with very realistic physics. The new game, developed by Magic Lantern and titled *Scorched Worlds*, will swap the quaint old 2D terrain to an advanced 3D environment and introduce plenty of multiplayer options to add to the popular original's hot seat mode. **++STOP++** Apparently, there is to be no demo for the highly anticipated *Evil Dead* game, Hail to the King. THQ is citing time constraints as the main reason, although we're crossing our fingers for a change of mind. **++STOP++** Another rumour making the rounds is that Fox Interactive's tongue in cheek FPS, *No On Lives Forever*, could be turned into a film starring Liz Hurley (presumably because she looked so good in *Austin Powers*). If it does happen it will mark an interesting development in the trend of making films out of games. Whether it will be any better than *Wing Commander*, *Super Mario Bros* et al is another matter. **++ENDS**

Respect for life is a mortal concern.



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HOTSHOTS

Turn a hard left and meet the new king of rally games



COLIN MCRAE

★ Codemasters • Out December 1

There have been many contenders to the rallying crown since *Colin McRae* was released a couple of years ago, but none of them have come close, either in terms of feel or sales. It's no surprise then that the red carpet has already been hoovered, foam-cleaned and laid out in expectation of Codemasters' sequel. The new engine makes sure that the graphics have been

given a complete makeover and, in combination with a new and more realistic physics engine, you can watch your car fall to pieces better than ever before. Bumpers will rattle along the ground after you bash into a particularly ill-placed tree and windows will show more cracks than the Queen Mother's face. There are new angles to watch the finished races through and enough

other bells and whistles to make it a worthy addition to your four-wheeled collection. Remember, Colin doesn't tolerate driving virgins and, unless you play it on softy arcade mode, you'll need to put in plenty of practice before you finish a race intact. If you think you've got what it takes (a steering wheel and loads of patience), then mark down December 1 on your calendar.



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★ ANSWERED BY Dave Woods

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Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

WRITE TO Mailbox, PC ZONE,
Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland
Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at www.pczone.co.uk for further info.

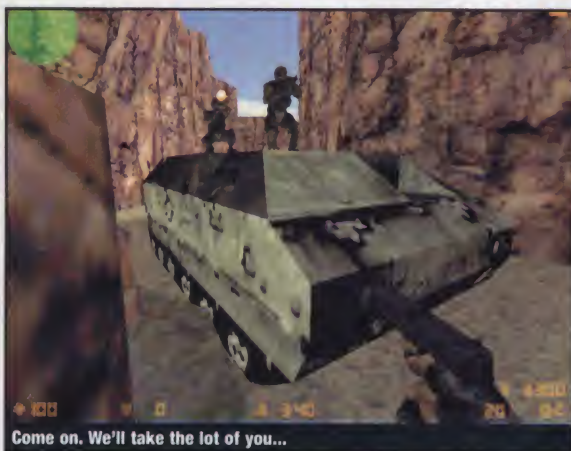
SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

For the next few issues of PC ZONE, we will be giving away a Microsoft IntelliMouse to everyone who gets a letter printed in Mailbox. These digital rodents are perfect for 3D shooters and games that require a quick and precise response from your pointing device – you can even use them with Windows 98 if you really want to. So get your writing skates on and send us your literary masterpieces. We promise not to be rude when we reply to them. Well, not very.



"I know that you're busy producing an excellent mag each month, but I reckon it's about time you put your money where your mouth is"

J ARTHUR CAN'T WAIT TO TAKE US ON AT COUNTER-STRIKE



Come on. We'll take the lot of you...

CHICKENS

You bang on about *Counter-Strike* all the time, but I don't think you're half as good as you think. My mates and I are regularly on the ZONE CS servers, but we've never seen your candy asses on there. Also, I've personally e-mailed you twice to challenge you to a game and have never heard a thing by way of reply. I know that you're busy producing an excellent mag each month, but I reckon it's about time you put your money where your mouth is. So I'm laying down the gauntlet. Either you play me and my mates at *Counter-Strike* or we win by default.

J Arthur, London

★ Now I'm not trying to make any excuses, but... We've been trying to get fast connections to the Internet for a few months, but at the moment we can't get past the security firewall. We've got 56K modems, but we don't want to let anything get in the way of our great skill and prowess. By my reckoning we're going to be fully equipped by the start of next year, when we're going to set aside one evening each month to beat any and every reader who cares to set us a challenge. We'll keep you posted in the

online section, but for now you should be pleased to hear that the chat forums on our website are back up and running.

ONLINE ASSISTANCE

In Issue 96, you printed a letter from Rob Blake moaning about how he can't afford ADSL and is having to get by with a 56K modem. He goes on to say that he's not happy with his 300+ ping, especially when playing first-person shooters. Well, as an accomplished *Counter-Strike* player I've always looked into ways of lowering ping, and even though I'm also using a 56K modem, I regularly get an average of 150.

Here are a few tips on how to get the best from your modem. Firstly, buy a true V90 modem from a reputable company such as US Robotics. They might cost a bit more, but they kick ass. Cheaper modems tend to disconnect regularly and fluctuate ping times wildly. Next, phone up your telephone company and ask them to increase the gain on your phone line. Finally, try to find all the UK servers under the *Counter-Strike* tab. These are going to be the fastest for UK users. Do all these

LETTER OF THE MONTH

CHAMPIONSHIP SCANDAL 00/01

I am writing to you for the first time to protest over the major high street retailers pricing of games. I read your review of *Championship Manager 2001* in issue 96 and it said it was priced at £19.99.

However, when I finished work and rushed to the nearest shop (Blockbuster) to buy it, it was priced at £24.99.

Because I wanted the game, I paid the £24.99, but it has been nagging me that if the recommended price is £19.99 how can shops inflate the price? I've been to other shops (HMV, Game, Virgin and Woolworths to name a few) and I have yet to find a shop with a £19.99 price tag. In fact, in WH Smiths it was priced at £29.99.

Is it worth Eidos/Sports Interactive stating a recommended price, when none of the shops that stock computer software are going to pay any bloody attention to it anyway. I think the slogan "Let's kick racism out of football" supported by Sports Interactive should be changed to "Let's screw the ordinary mug for every penny they've got." If it's priced at £19.99, then it should be £19.99!

Paul Saleh, Liverpool

★ *Championship Manager 00/01* went on sale on Friday 27 October, and since that time, we've been inundated with calls and e-mails from people asking about the price hike. We spoke to Eidos and its official line is that it doesn't control pricing, it just sets a recommended price, which the retailers are at liberty to ignore.

However, in this instance it has set a £24.99 recommendation, although it's expecting a 'price war' to force the price down in the high street soon after release. Funny that, because the Collyers were obviously convinced that a level of £19.99 had been set as illustrated by the following quote from our preview. "We do have these long discussions with Eidos," explains Oliver, "and they're pretty receptive to it – where we say we can't price this more than 20 quid." Seems like they need to reopen those long discussions.

On a general note, pre-ordering from the Internet gets you any game on release at a reduced price. Gameplay and other reputable e-tailers are selling the game for £19.99.



That team's worth about 150 million. Is the game worth £25?



LOW FLYING HORSES



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We love our games. And Martin loves dressing up in stupid costumes.

← things and you should drastically lower your ping.

David Johnston, Yorkshire

★ **Good advice, although you neglected to mention that the best place to play Counter-Strike is on the PC ZONE servers. You can find all the details on our website.**

SUPER-DUPER-TEST

I have been a reader of your magazine for a couple of years now, and I look forward to each issue. I just thought I'd mention what a brilliant addition the Supertest section is to your mag, even though it has been going for a while now.

Ranting and discussing games in comparison to other titles of the same genre is something that all of us gamers find ourselves bantering on about in the pub sooner or later, and I think it's great that your magazine offers a section that illustrates how involving these sessions can get. Because of the massive diversity of environments and storylines in today's titles, gaming is one of the richest conversational topics around. It would have been so easy for you to just go through the

motions and talk about the featured games in some monotonous style, simply as a way to fill column inches. Instead, the ZONE team is obviously passionate enough to care and are interested in *why* the selected games are good. It's good to know that the staff is as serious about gaming as their readers.

It's a great idea to have this off-the-record way of

first-person shooters online, I'm sick to death of coming across female gamers who simply don't have the nerve or reactions to challenge me in the way men do.

After all, these games are inherently violent and the so-called fairer sex is always complaining about how pointless violence is. Maybe the industry should start making online washing-up sims or RPGs about make up

“Maybe the industry should start making online washing-up sims or RPGs about make up and horses, so the girls can play their games and stop wasting our time”

ROB SLADE APPEARS TO HAVE A BIT OF TROUBLE WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX

second opinioning the best of the best, in terms of longevity and gameplay too. Keep up the good work, and thanks for providing me with a great read each month.

Ben Hollins

GIRL POWER #1

It struck me recently that more and more women are getting involved in computer games. As I'm sure you're aware everything is being forced into politically correct zones these days, but I think certain things should be kept sacred. After playing loads of

and horses, so the girls can play their games and stop wasting our time.

I am aware that this is a controversial opinion, but I'm sure that you will agree with me, and I know that there are plenty of other blokes out there who feel the same.

Rob Slade, Hull

GIRL POWER #2

First of all I have to make a confession. I'm a woman – a very angry woman, actually. I'm into games in a big way and always have been, but I can't help but be

disappointed by the blatant sexism in the gaming world. Recently I've started venturing online and the attitudes of some of the people I come across are unbelievable. I was playing *Counter-Strike* the other night and doing pretty well. As soon as the team found out I was woman, they didn't want to know and, after throwing a bit of abuse my way, they kicked me off the server. I know it doesn't happen all the time, but once or twice is too often. What is their problem? Are they so insecure that the thought of a woman beating them is too much to bear?

I've been reading *PC ZONE* for a couple of years, and although you're pretty receptive to female gamers, the tone of your magazine is biased towards the male reader and it's this sort of stuff that perpetuates the myth that we're not as good.

Alex Young, London

★ **Just couple of the letters we've received on this theme recently, and it goes to show that Alex is talking the truth. Rob, we don't agree with you actually and we know for a fact that female gamers can hold their own against males. We'd love to get more mail from female readers, so get writing, but in the meantime, if you're suffering too much abuse, check out www.womengamers.com for a bit of solidarity.**

A.O.E, W.T.F?

I am a 12-year-old boy who has recently started buying PC magazines. Two of my friends buy *PC ZONE*, so about six months ago I started to buy it. I love it and always read it from cover to cover. But one thing about your wonderful mag annoys me – a lot of gamers might find this stupid, but I can't understand all the abbreviations you use. For example, I have still not found out what *AOE* stands for. I have just started gaming and it has opened a whole new world for me, but I sit around for ages just trying to understand what things mean. It took me half an hour to find out that *SOF* was *Solder Of Fortune*. I think a short list explaining some of

the abbreviations might be useful. By the way, I think *Half-Life*'s brilliant and I'm not even remotely violent.

Michael Angus

★ **Glad to hear that. You're not the only one with this particular problem. Richie, our online editor thought that LOL was short for loads of love, but he'd kill me if I shared that with anyone. By the way, *AOE* stands for *Age Of Empires*.**

DVD BLUES

First off I want to say that I love your magazine, but I would like to complain about the DVD issue.

When I subscribed there was no mention of a DVD option and I was never offered the opportunity to receive the DVD with last month's edition. So when it plonked onto my doormat with only the CD on I wasn't surprised but I was disappointed.

I then noticed in the back of the mag that you could get the DVD if I sent you £2.50. So that's an extra £2.50 on top of my subscription fee with the added bother of waiting for it to arrive. That sucks. I thought you might treat your subscribers better than that...

The Butler, via e-mail

★ **We've had loads of letters from subscribers complaining about the lack of a DVD. All we can do is apologise.**

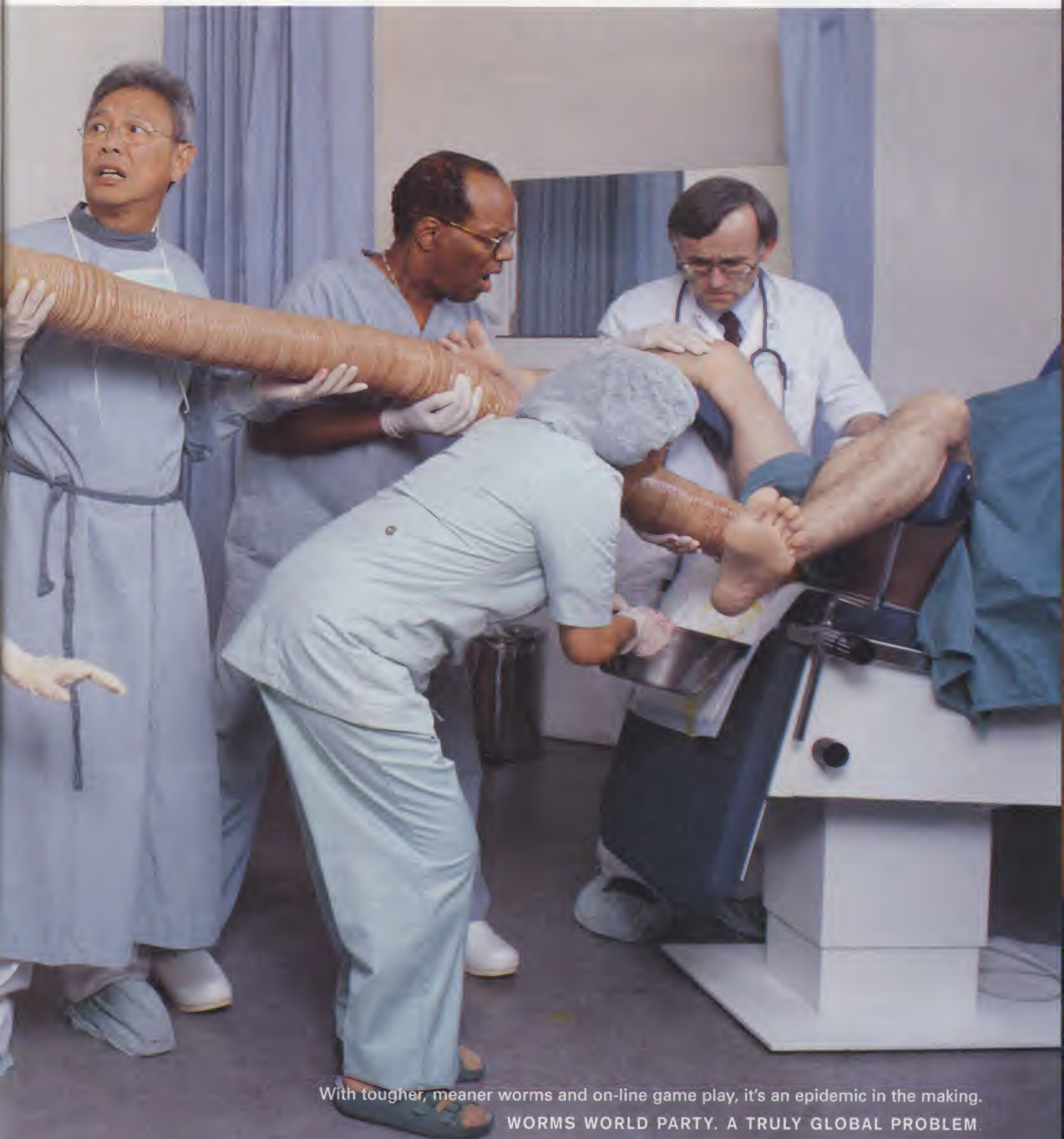
Subscription prices are set for a year and you pay a lot less than the cover price in the newsagents.

As DVDs cost more to produce than CDs, the DVD edition (on sale in newsagents) cost £4.99 instead of the usual £3.50. There was no way that we could include the DVD as standard without charging more. We thought the fairest way to do it would be to send out CD issues and give you the opportunity to purchase the DVD separately if you wanted to get hold of the extra content.

We're not putting DVDs on every issue yet (we don't think there's enough original content out there), but when we do we'll build this into subscription rates. In the meantime, send us your address and we'll send you a mouse. ☺



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Westwood go 3D in...

EMPEROR BATTLE FOR DUNE

No sooner had Westwood announced a 3D real time strategy game than *Steve Hill* was dispatched to Las Vegas to see it. If only someone had told them he was coming...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Westwood Studios
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE www.westwood.com/games/emperor
OUT Christmas 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Westwood's first 3D RTS
- ★ Spinnny-rotatey graphics
- ★ Third instalment of the *Dune* saga
- ★ Three unique sides to command

The war for universal supremacy will once again rage, and this time, it will happen in glorious 3D. Well, that's according to the opening line of the Westwood press release, anyway. Thus far, the pioneers of the RTS genre have resolutely stuck to their original 2D vision, while all around them have produced flashy 3D-accelerated affairs with multiple camera angles and lens flare ridden explosions. It's an approach that has yielded a number of undeniably great games, but unfortunately many developers have been so pre-occupied with delivering the visuals that they overlooked the gameplay, churning out ultimately shallow graphical showpieces. But not Westwood. At risk of being labelled Luddites, they sat back and observed what the rest of the world

was doing, while keeping the coffers topped up with the likes of *Tiberian Sun* (eventually) and the recent *Red Alert 2*. However, for the last two years, deep in a bunker in the Nevada desert (or a bland office on the outskirts of Las Vegas), a crack team has been secretly working on a game that will forever change the RTS landscape. That game is *Emperor: Battle For Dune*, and from the tantalising glimpse we were afforded, it seems vaguely all right.

Clearly, the shift to 3D represents a big decision for



Westwood has the benefit of hindsight. As Longpre says: "In the past we've resisted rushing into 3D because we didn't want to make the same mistakes of lots of the

"We knew just adding 3D to an RTS would lead to some problems. That is why we took our time to seriously consider how it was to be done"

WESTWOOD'S CHRIS LONGPRE ON THE MOVE TOWARDS 3D

Westwood, although it is adamant that its hand hasn't been forced. *Emperor* producer, Chris Longpre, spoke exclusively to *PC ZONE* from the corner of a Moroccan restaurant in Las Vegas.

"Oddly enough, gamers and the press have been screaming for 3D RTS over the past year, and now that a few have been done, it seems the feeling is not as strong as before. We knew that just adding 3D to an RTS would lead to some problems, and not provide the fun gameplay that gamers truly desire. That is why we took our time to seriously consider how it was to be done, and how to ensure great gameplay. We feel that our take on 3D in an RTS is optimal for visual excellence and gameplay superiority."

He's not the first game producer to think that, and he won't be the last. In waiting this long to make the move into 3D though,

companies that did. We've all seen some of the other games that have embraced 3D without really thinking about how it affects gameplay. Devastating consequences." Steady.

SPINNEY-ROTATEY

With this 3D advancement, *Emperor* will now feature the much-coveted spinnny-rotatey camera view that many gamers felt was lacking from games such as *Tiberian Sun*. Again, this is riddled with pitfalls, but Longpre is confident that they will get it right.

"Other 3D RTS's have made the mistake of letting the camera go everywhere. From a marketing point of view it's very exciting to say 'Hey look! You can look over the guy's shoulder as he's shooting that bazooka!' But from a gameplay point of view there's really no point in doing it. What happens is the



A Harkonnen refinery comes under attack from those pesky Ordos.



player gets confused, lost, disoriented, can't figure out how to get the camera back where it was, can't figure out which way is up, etc. So you have to be very careful how you handle that. The key thing you want to do with an RTS is you want to keep your point of view up in the sky where you can see lots of units at a time, and make a strategy."

From the cursory look we were given, it was difficult to see any discernible difference from the majority of 3D RTS camera systems, but we'll have to take his word for it. We can at least claim to have seen a Westwood RTS spin and rotate in front of our very eyes. And there aren't many people who can claim that (or indeed would ever want to).

We've established that *Emperor* is 3D-accelerated, and that it spins and flips like a drunken breakdancer. What about the minutiae of the actual game? Well for starters, it takes place within Westwood's somewhat modified version of the *Dune* universe. Some fans of the books have already been openly weeping about minor inconsistencies in the story, but might be better off channelling their efforts towards finding a girlfriend, or even just a friend. As Longpre says, "Our story takes place in the *Dune* Universe, prior to the events in the movie, but in roughly the same era of Arrakkis. We have developed the story ourselves with no intention of


CV
Westwood

WESTWOOD STUDIOS

A history to be proud of...

- 1992 *Dune II* – officially the world's first RTS.
- 1995 *Command & Conquer* – If *Dune II* opened the door for RTS, then *C&C* kicked it down.
- 1996 *Red Alert* – more of the same in a WWII style.
- 1998 *Tiberian Sun* – the arguments still rage.
- 2000 *Nox*? A highly rated RPG.
- 2001 *Red Alert 2* – Westwood's last 2D RTS, unless they're hiding something.

Q&A

CHRIS LONGPRE



Producer Chris Longpre has been making games since 1983. He ties up a few loose ends regarding the game they're all calling

Emperor: Battle For Dune.

PCZ Will there be any novel multiplayer modes included?

CHRIS "We are very excited about offering co-operative campaign play, where you and a friend can join forces and play the solo campaign game, as a team. We are also looking into targeted role teamwork, where each player has different abilities on the battlefield, thus making teamwork much more rewarding. It's still early, but there are some exciting possibilities in there."

PCZ Depending on who you talk to, *Dune* was a great/rubbish film. Are you proud that the games are now probably more famous than the film?

CHRIS "We are definitely proud that our *Dune* games have done so well, and are loved by the fans. We are making *Emperor*, the sequel to *Dune II*, for them."

PCZ Given the 3D graphics, will there be rivers of blood?

CHRIS "We try to keep this a little bit more on the teenage side without getting too gruesome. We're not about trying to make this a gory war game with lots of blood. We chose to play up a lot more of the political dealings going on underneath a lot of the exotic weaponry and exotic units."

PCZ Why are the actors in the cut scenes such no-marks?

CHRIS "We really tried to find some good strong talent that wasn't going to cost us six figures for a day's work. It's amazing how expensive actors get."

PCZ How great a step forward does *Emperor* represent?

CHRIS "It's a huge advancement over *Tiberian Sun* and a lot of the other titles we've done."

PCZ Will Westwood ever go back to 2D?

CHRIS "Anything we do in the future at this point will most likely be 3D."

PCZ So does this signal the end of the 2D RTS?

CHRIS "For us, I think so."



The procession lap, before the real action starts.

← tying into any of the storylines in the Frank Herbert books, both old and new. Our story is separate, and suited to the game that we have created."

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE

That game will feature three unique sides, namely the noble House Atreides, the evil Harkonnen and the insidious Ordos, each boasting bespoke units and buildings. Once a player chooses his main ally, he will then be able to form alliances with any two of five sub-houses, all with their own special weapons and

THE WAITING GAME

Out next year...

Westwood's policy of sometimes releasing games years after the original stated date has led to a degree of ribbing in the specialist press, not to mention tearful tantrums in games emporiums all over the world. However, if people don't know that a game is coming out then they can't really complain that it's late. Secrecy would appear to be Westwood's current strategy, as demonstrated by the swift announcement and subsequent release of Red Alert 2. A similar tack has been taken with Emperor, whose producer admits "It's one of the best kept secrets we've had. We're always striving to do better and better about shipping games on time. It's also important not to release all the information early because you're planning on it coming out on time. Tiberian Sun, if it had come out when we originally intended it to, it would have been just fine. We think this is just the right time to announce Emperor."

As for a release date?

"Some time next year.

Whenever it's done. It'll be out definitely before Christmas next year, 2001."

So if you're still drumming your fingers in two years' time, don't shoot the messenger.

benefits. The three homeworlds are markedly different, namely the oceanic paradise of Caladan, the industrial wasteland of Geidi Prime, and the icy planet of Draconis. The main planet Arrakis is also split into numerous territories, which can be claimed and lost in battle. As Longpre says: "Something we really wanted to do design-wise was to allow the player to decide which territories he thinks are important, which ones to attack, which ones to defend and which ones to ignore completely. Each territory has strengths and weaknesses. The main goal here was to get the sense of planetary conflict, epic in scale."

As for the conflict, the weapons are predictably outlandish, including such treats as the lofty Kobra cannon and the lumbering Minotaurus tank. The battles will mainly be large-scale affairs though, as according to Longpre: "RTS fans are not really interested in playing a squad-level game. They want to be looking at a battlefield, commanding whole groups of troops, armies as it were. Looking at the defences of a base, figuring out 'How do I get my best

"The weapons are predictably outlandish, including such treats as the lofty Kobra cannon and the lumbering Minotaurus tank"

units into the base, past that. I'll put my troopers here, my sonic tank there, and then when they come out I'm going to send in the engineers through the back door' strategy. And that's something we've tried really hard to emphasise is that diversity gives you lots of choices as a player, how you customise your army."

THE SPICE OF LIFE

All too often, real-time strategy games involve a host of generic units grinding each other down in a long-winded war of attrition. Westwood has taken steps to ensure this doesn't happen, and has concentrated on making the three main houses very different.



A dawn attack catches this base unawares.



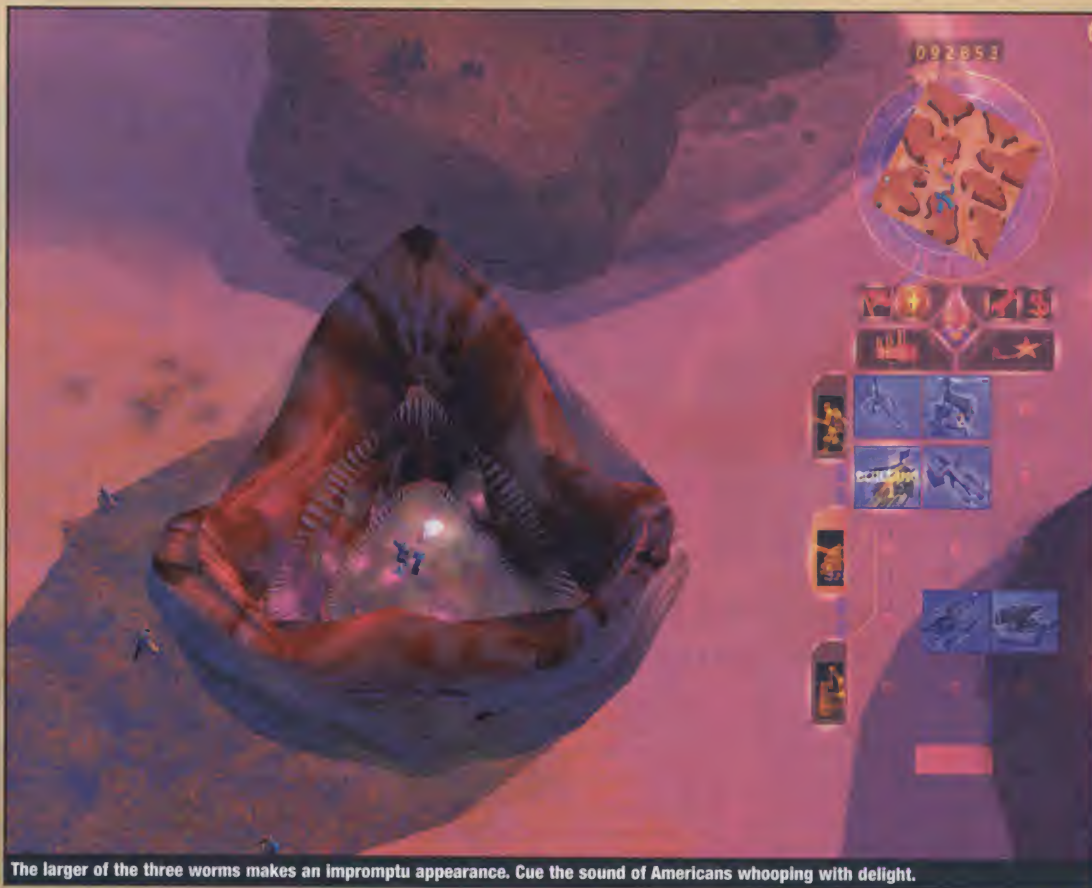
"Transformers - robots in disguise!"



A Harkonnen bridge comes under heavy fire.



The Atreides homeworld, Caladan, tomorrow.



The larger of the three worms makes an impromptu appearance. Cue the sound of Americans whooping with delight.

According to Longpre: "One of the big design goals that we had was to provide some really meaningful diversity in the sides and in the units. So, the Harkonnen are very evil, their whole unit selection really reflects their sort of attitude about how they treat warfare. They're very brutal. They don't mind wasting resources, wasting their troops or your troops. The Atreides are the noble warriors. They're the ones that are very loyal and will do anything that the Duke asks them to do. A little bit more precise, when they take out something they just want to blow up the building they need to stop the production and win the war. And their units kind of reflect this general philosophy. The Ordos, which are treacherous and devious and

insidious, they're the ones that have plans within plans, they're always manipulating something behind the scenes to get what they want. If you're a sneaky hit-and-run kind of player, Ordos are the way to go. They're also expert traders, and they trade with everybody in the galaxy, so they've got a lot of really strange technologies nobody's ever seen before."

And let's not forget the worms, which actually come in three sizes. However, before Chris can tell us about them, the cheesy game music segues into something more exotic and far louder, as a real live belly dancer begins to gyrate behind the monitor. *Emperor* might be a good-looking game, but there's simply no competition. And on that bombshell... **FW**



A steam-powered 3D robot.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Lights, camera, interaction...



Musetta Vander



Michael Dorn

As in previous Westwood titles, the story of *Emperor* will be told through a series of live action cut-scenes filmed on their own set. Numerous key players from Hollywood and beyond were desperate to land one of the much-coveted roles, but following an extensive selection process the three main parts went to Michael Dorn (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*), Vincent Schiavelli (*Ghost*, *Man On The Moon*, *Batman Returns*) and Musetta Vander (*The Cell*, *Wild Wild West*). Hmmm, household names in their own homes, the lot of them.

THE HOUSES OF DUNE

Not one, not two, but three different sides to choose from. Westwood sure knows how to spoil a bloke...



ATREIDES

This honourable house from Caladan employs unlikely methods in its struggle to secure Arrakis: noble spirit, just ways and unfailing virtue. Ruling its homeworld

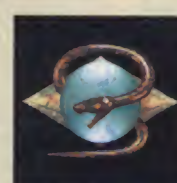
for ten generations with justice and generosity, House Atreides has perfected a form of government that results in a well-organised society and a spiritually satisfied people.



HARKONNEN

Hailing from an industrial wasteland of a planet called Giedi Prime, House Harkonnen is built on a simple foundation of fear and terror, two tactics that make the Baron

Harkonnen's troops that much more dangerous. With an order based on treachery, soldiers rise through the ranks through deceit, trickery and, if necessary, assassination.



ORDOS

These aristocrats are shrouded in mystery and speculation, which is just how the statesmen of Ordos want to keep it. Run by a secretive cartel of the rich and powerful

who specialise in trade and smuggling, House Ordos has no identifiable leader. Even the citizens on the ice-coated, remote planet of Sigma Draconis have little grasp on who controls their fate.

Hitler's back on the march. It's time to...

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gray Matter Studios
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.activision.com
OUT Spring 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ *Wolfenstein* started the whole FPS genre
- ★ Astonishing graphical detail which is better than anything seen to date
- ★ Non-stop action, with no more of that find-the-coloured-key nonsense
- ★ The best flame-thrower in the business

⬇ They didn't wear this at Dunkirk.



Broadsword calling Danny Boy. Broadsword calling Danny Boy. Oh all right then, Broadsword calling Paul Presley

Drew Markham has issues. Serious issues. Not least of which is his almost pathological hatred for chairs. We've been sitting through a presentation of *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* at Gray Matter's Santa Monica headquarters for a little over an hour already and the current chair destruction count is somewhere in the high '80s. This isn't accidental collateral damage either. Markham is going out of his way to hunt down each and every chair in the game then either blow them apart with machine-gun fire, pick them up and smash them against a wall, or use them as a WWF-style weapon by hitting people over the head (enemy or friendly soldiers, it doesn't seem to matter to him).

This is the same team that was responsible for the controversy magnet that

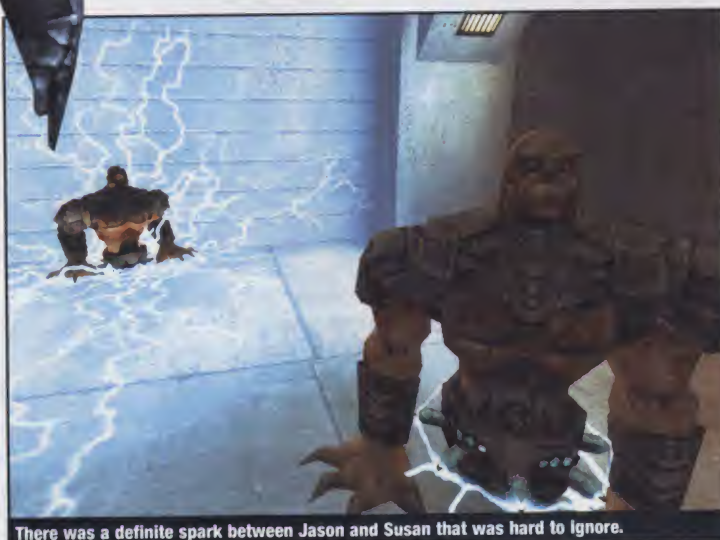
was *Kingpin* though, so expecting a calm, sober and responsible bunch of people was probably pushing it. On the plus side, these are exactly the right sorts of minds to bring us the sick and twisted sequel to what most people consider to be the first of the true first-person shooters.

PINEAPPLE FLAMBÉ

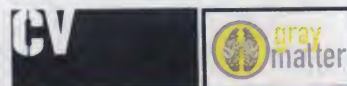
For the most part, the presentation is a demonstration of firepower and graphical splendour. From the opening *Saving Private Ryan* beach-storming scene (in which a body explodes in front of your face within the first five seconds), it's obvious Gray Matter is going to town on every tiny aspect of the first-person shooter. Take grenades for instance. "I've never really been happy with grenades in first-person shooters," says Markham. "It's always like there's a guy in a window and I'd really like to be able to just blow one up right in his face but you can never do that because you never have control over

the timing of the fuse." In *Wolf*, grenades have a timed fuse that you can set in motion before you throw. "It's like when you were a kid playing with fireworks. You'd always want to throw them just at the last minute as the fuse was about to blow. Depending on how ballsy you are, you can do some pretty cool things," grins Markham, demonstrating the fact by picking up a German grenade and lobbing it back where it came from with a second to spare. "It's a really simple thing but it adds a really big dynamic to the gameplay. We had a lot of developers come up to us at E3 saying they were going to steal that."

And then Markham brings up the flame-thrower. Two words: 'holy' and 'shit'. "The nice thing about it is that you can weave it around the room," he explains, doing just that, setting tables, chairs and scattered body parts alight. "You know, around corners and stuff. It's not just a 2D weapon. It really fills up a room."



There was a definite spark between Jason and Susan that was hard to ignore.



GRAY MATTER

It's been through a few name changes in the past three or four years, but it has essentially kept to a familiar style...

1997 As part of Interplay Studios, the gang bring us hillbilly squal 'em up, *Redneck Rampage*.

1999 As Xatrix Entertainment, Markham and co spark fury and outrage among the middle classes with the foul-mouthed and ultra-violent *Kingpin*.

2001 Now, as Gray Matter, we get *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* which, er, returns us to castle Wolfenstein. And a jolly nice place it is too.



Waving the thing about really is an incredible feeling. It just feels so... meaty. So alive. A hapless Nazi soldier runs into the room and in an instant is turned into a Reich crispy. Watching him burn you almost feel sorry for him. Well, Markham doesn't: "Mmm, flambé."

There are also some less authentic weapons on hand, and although Markham refused to go into much detail, other than mentioning the word "occult" several times, during a brief unsupervised hands-on experience after the main presentation, an accident while looking for the Crouch key suddenly opened up the game's entire arsenal. The Tesla Gun is

“The flame-thrower is incredible. A hapless Nazi runs into the room and is instantly turned into a Reich crispy”

essentially the old Lightning Gun from the original *Quake*, although much more impressive. Blue bolts of lightning fly off in all directions, searching for victims to fry, and bodies jerk about as they're hit, reminiscent of the *Ghostbusters*' proton packs. But remember, you didn't read that here.

"You can also kick someone to death, but it's tricky. One of the late-night games we have here in the office is to try and get through a level by kicking everyone. Kicking and using chairs."

IT'S ONLY WAR

Throughout the demonstration, Markham is keen to stress that the emphasis is not on realism but on entertainment. This is despite such nerve-shatteringly realistic moments as watching Nazi soldiers marching around a street corner in perfect formation, only to spot you and start spreading out as they advance. Enemy AI is extremely advanced (for once seeming to justify the actual term 'intelligence'). Soldiers tend to hunt in packs, watching each others' backs, reacting to your weapons (watching them scatter as you

approach with a chain gun or flame-thrower is hilarious), taking over gun emplacements that have been vacated, even throwing back your own grenades if their reactions are quick enough. It's quite astonishing in practice, giving the impression that you're actually up against other humans throughout.

Despite that, Markham is adamant that realism is only used when necessary. "Head shots are in there, for instance, but we haven't taken things as far as we did in *Kingpin*. *Soldier Of Fortune* has kind of taken all that as far as it's ever going to go. There's a kind of retro quality to *Wolfenstein* and we always have to make decisions based on

what's the most fun option in any given situation as opposed to what's the most realistic. The catchphrase here is basically 'run and gun'. That's why we took things like reloads out. There was just no reason to have them in. We want this to be more like a World War II movie than some perfect simulation of war."

THE MIND'S EYE

I was actually a little disadvantaged to the rest of the journos on the trip, in that I was the only one who hadn't already seen *Wolfenstein* running in some shape or another. Much like yourselves, all I'd experienced were a couple of impressive screenshots and a lot of hype. Consequently, in my mind I'd done that most damaging of actions – building up a mental picture of what I would want the game to be. Reality rarely comes close to our dream ideals in these situations and the actual result is usually something of a let down. *Wolfenstein* truly is an exception. Having now witnessed it in action, I can honestly say that when Gray Matter finally decides it's ready, we really will be in for something very special indeed. **[E]**



IT'S A SMALL WORLD

When you want decay, only the very oldest will do...

The graphical quality of *Wolf* is extremely special. This is because the designers haven't relied on hand-drawn interpretations of existing textures, but have just gone for the real thing. "We went to Europe twice on very long trips, taking thousands of digital photographs to get all the textures," explains Markham. "Typically, when you look at medieval games they're a little cheesy-looking because an artist tries their best to recreate it, but at the end of the day nothing looks like 2000-year-old bricks than 2000-year-old bricks. There's a certain quality to them that you just can't fake." Later, as Markham shows us through some of the photographs they took, I'm stunned to see the church in which I was christened pop up. We then see the textures as used in the game and there is no discernible difference.



St Luke's church, Chelsea. Just so you know.

The witching hour returns...

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 3: THE ELLY KEDWARD TALE



Prepare to be scared
out of your boots.
This is truly chilling.



**Eye of newt, wing of bat,
Keith Pullin is a... rat**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ritual Entertainment
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive
WEBSITE blairwitch.godgames.com
OUT November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Based on Haxan's *Blair Witch* universe
- ★ Only survival/horror game to boast spells
- ★ Uses the *Nocturne* engine
- ★ Loads of different monsters to kill
- ★ Should appeal to wide audience rather than just *BW* fans.

Halloween has definitely lingered longer than usual this year. With a film sequel and two exciting games to titillate our pagan curiosity, it's been hard to escape the omnipresent spirit of the Blair Witch. Even now, the chances of sleeping peacefully remain slim, when in the spirit of modern horror the witch just keeps coming back for more.

RITUALISTIC SACRIFICE

Ritual Entertainment is currently putting together the finishing touches for the third and final game in the *Blair Witch* trilogy. *Blair Witch Volume 3: The Elly Kedward Tale* takes place before the other two games,

concentrating instead on events from 1786, when Elly Kedward (the so-called Blair Witch) is accused of using local brats in unsavoury pagan rituals, and is then exiled from the township of Blair into the surrounding woods.

The player assumes the role of Jonathan Pyre, a disillusioned Pastor (and part-time witch hunter) who takes it upon himself to investigate the subsequent murders of various townsfolk after Elly's banishing, and

make sense. Consequently, you have to wonder whether there's any point in creating the game at all when effectively, we already know the ending.

Anyway, fact is the game is being made and, once again, it's the spooky *Nocturne* engine that powers proceedings. Graphically, you can expect flitting shadows, great use of lighting and a rather tasty cloth modelling technique on the main protagonist. In other words, the aesthetics are not too dissimilar to

“With a film sequel and two exciting games to titillate our Pagan curiosity, it's been hard to escape the omnipresent spirit of the Blair Witch”

thus save the township from the witch bitch and restore his own wavering faith in the Lord Almighty.

One curious quirk the game will undoubtedly have to abide by is the fact that Pyre will never actually succeed in his quest. Why? Because if he did manage to banish whatever evil is lurking in Blair, the films and games set further down the fictional Blair Witch timeline simply wouldn't

Rustin Parr or Coffin Rock.

The real difference with *Blair 3* lies in its beefed-up combat system. Standard guns and gadgetry are accompanied by a unique spell-based interface that should, if all goes to plan, make *Blair 3* the complete horror action/adventure. Sure enough, we racked our brains to think of another game that blends spell casting with fixed viewpoint



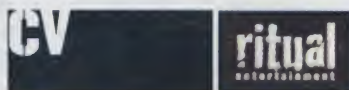
This is the stuff of witchy legends: eerily secluded forests; wood demons human sacrifices and pagan rituals.



As Jonathan Pyre, disillusioned pastor and erstwhile witch hunter, you'll go on the long journey into the night hunting the Blair Witch.



Men with flowing robes, short trousers and silly wigs. Oh, how the Witch laughed.



RITUAL ENTERTAINMENT

Based in Fort Worth, Dallas, Ritual is most well known for the notorious first-person shooter *SiN*. The company's complete portfolio of work is as follows:

1998 *Scourge Of Armagon*: A *Quake* mission pack that succeeded only in honing the team's skills for...

1998 *SiN*: Powered by the *Quake II* engine, this decent FPS featured the buxom delights of arch-villainess, Elexis Sinclair.

2000 *Heavy Metal FAKK*: The obsession with large breasts continues in a clichéd and limited FPS.

cinematic gameplay and came up with nothing: *Resident Evil* can only boast guns; *Alone In The Dark* is a similar kettle of fish; and the original *Nocturne* is the same.

So it seems that *Blair 3* will be a unique proposition, but the truth is Ritual has clearly not played by the rules here. A considerable amount

of time has been spent tweaking the *Nocturne* engine rather than sticking with the original code, whereas Terminal Reality and Human Head used the engine as it was and moulded their games around it. It's probably the reason why the latter developers' games are sitting on shop shelves while *Blair 3* still languishes in the sticky mitts of play testers. But then Ritual is renowned for making things difficult for itself – look at the bug problems on *SiN*...

SHAMAN YOU

As it stands, gameplay falls somewhere between *Diablo* and *Resident Evil*. There are three forms of magic that will aide Pyre in his quest: Christian Invocation, Shamanistic Rites and good old Pagan witchcraft. This magic is currently one of the major areas of concern for the developers. One word that keeps cropping up when Ritual talk about this segment of the engine is 'robust'. Apparently, creating spells that look different and affect objects or monsters in different ways is no easy task. Not only must the particle

effects for the spells be significantly and recognisably different from each other, the interface must also be intuitive and easy to use.

The enemies themselves should also prove to be varied. Players will encounter everything from zombies to demons – and choosing whether to dispose of these creatures with magic or more conventional weapons of the era, such as a musket, should be part of the game's allure. There will also be certain magic items to help Pyre in his quest, and he'll also receive advice from three mentors (Shaman, Pagan and Christian) who turn up from time to time to teach new spells and whisper obscure riddles into his ear.

WHICH WITCH?

Overall, *Blair 3* will be considerably more action-based than the first two. Puzzles will be extremely limited with the main focus falling squarely on blasting, zapping, running and panicking. Whether or not this leads to a rather more sedate atmosphere as opposed to the paranoid, menacing atmosphere of the film and the first game in particular remains to be seen.

Q&A

JON K GALLOWAY



Designer and art director from Ritual Entertainment and the man behind *Blair Witch*, Jon K Galloway gets some demons off his chest.

PCZ Would you camp alone in the middle of a remote forest for a week? If so, what three items would you take with you?

JON A black and white video camera, and large female production crew... I wanna make movies. My third item would be witch repellent... an Uzi.

PCZ We've already reviewed *Blair 1: Rustin Parr* and frankly we were impressed – the game recreated the intense paranoia of the movie perfectly. How will *Blair 3*'s general atmosphere compare with the original film?

JON It will be spooky and creepy like the movie. There is always a sense of not knowing exactly what is going on around you. You see shadows and movement, you hear sounds... but you don't always know their origin.

PCZ What's the most frightening experience you've ever had in your life?

JON Waking up floating three feet above my bed naked...

PCZ What was the first game you ever bought?

JON *Wasteland*... I played that game all the way through more times than I can count.

PCZ What in your opinion is the most frightening game ever made?

JON I think games could be much more frightening than they are currently. I'd like to see a game that really freaks me out with some nasty, evil feelings... like *The Exorcist* or *Jacob's Ladder*. Something with a real story behind it. Most of today's horror and action games are more about survival... I would have to say that the most frightening game to date was *Daikatana*. If that's the future of three-four year development cycles, we should all be scared.

PCZ What forthcoming game(s) are you most looking forward to?

JON I've lots sitting at my desk waiting... *Vampire*, *Icwind Dale* and *Diablo 2*. As far as new up-and-coming games go, I can't wait to get my hands on *Tribes 2* and *Team Fortress 2*.

What cannot be ignored, however, is that out of all three games, this is probably the title that is most removed from the general creeping terror of the whole *Blair Witch* ethos.

This doesn't mean it's going to be a bad game, though. What we're actually saying is that, because of the action-orientated gameplay, this is most likely to be the game that will ultimately appeal to a wider gaming audience rather than fans of the *Blair Witch* legend alone. Look out for the review in a couple of months. [E]



If God created all men equal, how will you get the upper hand?

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SIDEWINDER
STRATEGIC
COMMANDER

SideWinder® Strategic Commander raises the standard of strategy gaming, beyond expectations. Gain the competitive edge as you train, deploy and command your forces faster and more efficiently. Twist, spin and scroll around your gaming world and replace your complex keyboard commands with simple button clicks. Strategic Commander has no equal. Your time is now.

www.strategicccommander.co.uk

Microsoft

HALCYON SUN

Richie Shoemaker flies into free space

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Kuju

PUBLISHER Freeloader

WEBSITE www.freeloader.com

OUT Part one and two available now

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Story-driven space combat
- ★ Competent 3D graphics
- ★ It's free
- ★ Small downloads

In the world of computer games 18 months is a long time. It was about that long ago that we first caught sight of *Jump Runner*, a space-combat game being developed by UK outfit Kuju.

We were at LA's E3 sweaty games show, and saw it cowering in a less-than-impressive corner of the LA Conference Centre. Its lead designer was surprisingly

content to extol the delights of the game for the umpteenth time that day, unfazed by the fact that compared to other space games (*Starlancer* and *FreeSpace 2*) on show elsewhere in the cavernous building, it wasn't quite up there.

However, things have moved on since the summer of 1999. For one thing, both *Starlancer* and *FreeSpace 2* have been and gone. For another, *Jump*

“Halcyon Sun is like a computerised version of *Babylon 5*. If enough people like it, a new series will be commissioned and, being free, that seems very likely”

Runner has changed quite a bit in the intervening months. Re-christened *Halcyon Sun*, the game is now less of an *Elite*-style trade 'em up and more in the *Wing Commander* mould. More importantly, the game will now be released for nothing on the ever-

expanding Internet. In other words, if you have a modem, you can download the entire game free of charge.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

A simple, attractive, story-driven action game, *Halcyon Sun* will be released in 12 episodes. The first two of which you'll find on this month's cover CD. Thereafter, episodes will be released every other week, each a

computerised version of *Babylon 5*. If enough people like it, a new series will be commissioned and, being free, that seems very likely.

Cast as fighter pilot Dru Avery, the story puts you at the head of a squadron of hotshot space jocks stationed on the CSS *Halcyon Sun*, flying on the side of righteousness against the forces of evil. Actually, things aren't quite as clear cut as that, with political infighting, treachery and back-stabbing threatening an uneasy alliance. TV scriptwriters have been drafting storylines and professional (read, out of work) actors have been providing motion capture for the 3D-modelled characters and voice-overs.

It may be a bit much to ask whether *Halcyon Sun* will be as good as, say, *FreeSpace 2*, but you never can tell, and for value alone it will be more than worthwhile. Check out the CD then go online and find out. [X]



Space propulsion has never been too kind to the environment.



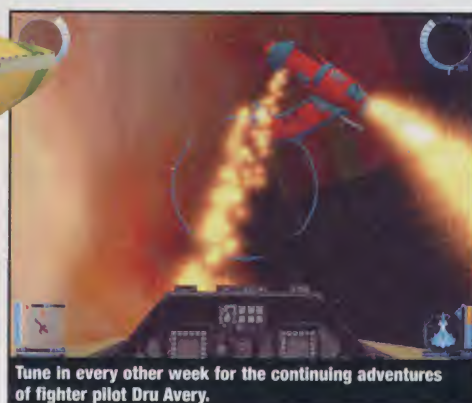
It's all going off here.



"You all live in a yellow submarine."



Kuju has done pretty well to cram the game engine into a 10Mb download.



Tune in every other week for the continuing adventures of fighter pilot Dru Avery.

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Vehicles are good for squashing perfectly able bodies into a shapeless mush.



One of those windows would make a really good sniping position.



Yeah, hide behind that grotty bench. That's really going to help you.



Well, this place looks homely. If you're rust that is.



Shooting in the dark will affect how good your aim is.



The horrors of war. No clean toilets anywhere.

FALLOUT TACTICS: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

Strategies for fighting with your friends and breaking up with your partner? **Mark Hill** plays agony aunt

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Micro Forte/14 Degrees East
PUBLISHER Interplay
WEBSITE www.interplay.com/falloutbos
OUT Spring 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ✦ It's set in the much-loved *Fallout* universe.
- ✦ It moves away from the RPG crowd and closer to the strategy camp.
- ✦ Mixes turn-based combat with real-time tactics.
- ✦ Has more than a hint of *X-COM: Apocalypse* about it.

Having transformed computer role-playing and laid the ground for games such as *Baldur's Gate* and *Planescape: Torment* to appear, it's little wonder the *Fallout* games are revered by the RPG community. It seems strange then that the next *Fallout* game won't follow the same tried and tested route that would guarantee it big sales, but full marks to the developers

for being brave enough to try something new. What *Brotherhood Of Steel* actually is won't become clear until we've played the game, but at the moment it's being described as a squad-based semi turn-based strategy in the vein of *X-COM: Apocalypse*. What this means is that you have the option to use the traditional turn-based system as in the original games or a real-time option that still uses a point system to determine how far you can go and the damage you make. Don't worry. It's not as complicated as it sounds.

But *Brotherhood Of Steel* is still very much a *Fallout* game, and anyone who's played either of the first two games will be immediately familiar with the stats and skills system. There are perks, drugs, adult violence and a similar dialogue system to the original, ensuring the spirit of *Fallout* remains intact. So much in fact that any obvious differences between the RPG that

was and the strategy game that will be are not at all clear. The most glaring difference is bound to be a greater emphasis on combat, meaning the RPG elements are peripheral rather than the core of the game. Among the features announced for these tactical battles are the traps, demolition charges, targeted shots, darkness affecting aim and a pretty nifty heartbeat detector.

In true *X-COM* fashion you'll be able to select a squad of six soldiers from a pool of 30, then you'll have to make

war where you play a confused, but all-important, character. However, if the single-player story doesn't do it for you there's enough multiplayer action to look forward to.

Along with all the pre-made characters from the single-player game you'll also be able to make up your own to pitch against other people's creations. If that wasn't enough, the game will include an editor so you can create your very own missions. It remains to be seen whether *Fallout Tactics* will appeal to

“If the single-player story doesn't do it for you there's enough multiplayer action to look forward to”

your way through 20 missions. How you complete a mission and the things you do (or fail to do) affect the following missions and the storyline. This deals with a group of Brotherhood Of Steel soldiers intent on tracking down the mutant army, sparking a

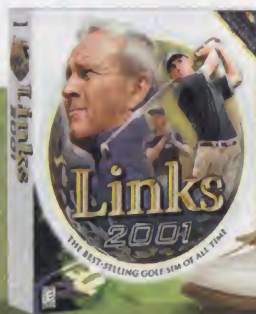
all the role-players out there or whether it will have to find its audience exclusively among RTS-heads. On the other hand, there are enough people hungry for *X-COM*-style games to make this a success in a market full of formulaic games. **[P]**



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Walking in a winter wonderland.



A pigeon looks for its next victim.



All rollercoaster rides will be cancelled until further notice, due to the wrong kind of snow on the tracks.



I've been on worse, honest.



Giant squid runs havoc in theme park shocker.

THEME PARK INC

Martin Korda is scared of heights. Cue demonic laughter

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER: Bullfrog
PUBLISHER: EA
WEBSITE: www.ea.com
OUT: January 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's *Theme Park World* with a series of goals
- Easy-to-use rollercoaster editor
- More economic control of your parks
- New visitor, weather and ride types

According to Sigmund Freud, there is a childlike sense within each and every one of us that is constantly fighting against our adult will. This theory could help explain the huge popularity of everything theme park related in both children and adults alike. But enough of the psychobabble, we've got a game to look at.

Following on from *Theme Park World*, *TPI* attempts to take all the fun gameplay and addictiveness of its predecessor and incorporate an

on-going storyline around it. You see, the only problem that us journo bods had with the last game was that it became repetitive far too quickly. Once you had a prosperous theme park up and running, there was very little left to challenge you.

The plot will revolve around the takeover of a set of theme parks by an up-and-coming business consortium. You play a young assistant manager who the company's president has taken a particular liking to. In fact, he likes you so much that he sees you as his successor, which inevitably saves you from having to brown nose your way up the corporate ladder.

Anyhow, in order to take over you're going to need a 51 per cent stake in the company, and the way to gain shares will be to successfully complete a series of tasks that the old man gives you, such as raising the happiness of a theme park to a certain level and keeping it there for a set amount of time. Once you've

completed the objective, you'll move on to another theme park and be issued with new orders. This looks as though it will make *TPI* far more focused, and as a result, far less repetitive.

“The demonstration we sat through gave us plenty of reason to believe *Theme Park Inc* may be more than a match for its main rival, *Rollercoaster Tycoon*”

There will be 15 levels set over three themed areas – Arabian Nights, Polar Zone and New Sciences, each with their own set of rides and unique architecture. What's more, you'll have greater control of your finances, as you'll now be able to set the price for each individual ride, rather than just the admission fee, and choose how much to pay each of your employees.

Further improvements to the gameplay will include new types of visitors, such as flower-loving OAPs, freak weather conditions and an

easier rollercoaster-building interface. With this, you'll be able to build and edit your rides with a few simple clicks on your mouse, and having seen it first hand, we can tell you that it's looking pretty intuitive.

The demonstration we sat through gave us plenty of reason to believe *Theme Park Inc* may well be more than a match for its main rival, *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, and could possibly even better it. However, the omission of a free-play option is somewhat baffling. Still, this aside, it's looking pretty good and we've all gone and booked ourselves a one-week ticket to Alton Towers over Christmas so we can do some research on the ideal type of ride. It's all part of the service... [E]

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PCZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the **ZONE** reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've got to buy and which games to avoid

THE PC ZONE GAMES SYSTEM

This is the machine we use to review new titles on. Our reviewers also use older machines to get an impression of gaming in the 'real' world, but this is what we currently consider the best value-for-money set up. As games become more demanding, the specs will change to reflect that

At the heart of the machine is a 600MHz AMD Athlon processor. These babies are seriously scorching, optimised for 3D applications, so first-person shooters fly like you wouldn't believe. Faster Athlons are now available, but at the current prices, this is probably the best value for money. The system bus runs at a godlike speed, so the whole thing is like a supercar with no brake pedal.

Supporting the processor is a MaxiGamer Xentor 32 from Guillemot, purveyors of all things graphicy. Based on the TNT2 chipset, these RAM-packed beasts are designed to cope with the polygons, textures and special effects that those game developers insist on chucking at the screen. Guillemot has a new GeForce 256-based card in the offing, which we're hoping to upgrade to soon.

Pionex has supplied the cases and 128Mb of PC100 memory for the motherboard. For gaming, especially with RAM prices as they are now, 128Mb is the optimum amount. The cases have room for expansion without taking up too much space.

Hard drive services are provided by the stunning 7,200rpm, 20Gb

Maxtor DiamondMax Plus (from the 5120 family of drives). It's large and fast with room for full installs and quick to load games when you want to play them.

Sound services are supplied by VideoLogic. The SonicVortex 2 card is a PCI device featuring Aureal A3D 2.0, ideal for gamers. The latest drivers are stunning, using the card's own chip to reduce the processing overhead on the CPU when calculating 3D audio. Aureal's API now handles not only sounds themselves, but also their reflections: as you approach a doorway, you can hear sounds from the room reflected into the corridor. Immersive stuff.

VideoLogic also supplies speakers from the superb Sirocco range. We primarily use Crossfires for gaming – they may seem expensive, but you get twice the quality you pay for. Four satellite speakers and a humungous subwoofer give pinpoint accuracy for 3D audio and bass meaty enough for the rumbliest explosions. We also use other speakers from the range (the original Sirocco and new Sirocco Pro) for sound-card testing.

Guillemot's DVD Theater set-up provides not only the ability to load games quickly, but also to watch DVD movies with its bundled MPEG decoder card.

Peripherals are supplied by Microsoft, from USB mice (top-notch for first-person shooters) to the full force-feedback monty – joysticks and driving wheels – and the ubiquitous SideWinder gamepads.

Last but not least, are headphones from Philips and fabulous 17in Brilliance monitors (107Bs). If you're used to cheap monitors typically bundled with new PCs, the crispness and stability of the image on these comes as quite a shock.



REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

We at **ZONE** pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre, and won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we have our Feedback section on page 117. This is where you get the opportunity to put your point of view into **PC ZONE**.



CHECK THE SPECS!

The standard spec machine these days is a P233 with 32Mb of memory – but before a game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the tech specs on packaging can be a little optimistic, make sure you check out the We Say bit in our tech specs box. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • Activision 01895 456700 • Anco 01322 292513 • Blue Byte (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • Codemasters 01926 814132 • Cryo 01926 315552 • Eidos Interactive 020 8636 3000 • Electronic Arts 01932 450000 • Empire Interactive 020 8343 7337 • Europress 01625 855000 • Gremlin Interactive 0114 263 9900 • GT Interactive 020 8222 9700 • Hasbro Interactive 020 8569 1234 • Infogrames 0161 827 8000 • Interplay 020 7551 4222 • Microids (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • Microsoft 0345 002 000 • Mattel 01444 246333 • NovaLogic 020 7405 1777 • Rage Software 0151 237 2200 • Take 2 Interactive 01753 854 444 • THQ 01483 767656 • Ubi Soft 020 8944 9000 • Zabrac 01626 332233

MEET THE TEAM

All **PC ZONE**'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

What are you hoping Santa brings you for Christmas?



CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *EverQuest: The Ruins Of Kunark*

A Chelsea manager who actually speaks English.



DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *No One Lives Forever* and *Counter-Strike*

A copy of *Duke Nukem Forever*.



RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Project IGI* and *Counter-Strike*

A robot lawnmower, so that my weekends can be more peaceful.



MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, turn-based
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Deus Ex*, *Champ Manager 00/01* and *CS*

A teleportation device so that I wouldn't have to commute to work.

CHRISTMAS CHEER

★ **REVIEWS EDITOR** Dave Woods



It's Christmas time; there's no need to be afraid. It seems like only yesterday that I was stood outside a neighbour's house singing this song in the hope of getting a bit of loose change or a mince pie tossed in my tin. All in aid of charity, of course.

But this year it seems like there is something to fear. This time last year the market was awash with big name titles vying for your Christmas cash. This year, things have definitely slowed down, and a lot of games have slipped through to spring, including, of course, the mighty *Black & White*. Are games getting too complicated for their own good? Or are we witnessing the first knock-on effects as huge multinationals take over what used to be a bedroom industry?

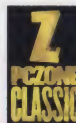
Thankfully, FPS fans have been saved the ignominy of a peaceful Christmas with the *Gunman Chronicles*. This was initially going to be a mod release for *Half-Life* but Sierra and Valve noticed it, thought it looked good and bagged it for a full price release. That's why it seems to have appeared from nowhere. Guess what? It is good, and if you're hankering after a single-player shooter, we'd like to introduce you to it. We think you'll make good bed partners.

Another shining light in the gloom is *Project IGI*. The developers raced against time to ensure that we had review code for this issue and, with a week to spare, they finally declared the code finished. We rushed Richie down to their headquarters and he was mightily impressed with what he saw. Turn the page for our world exclusive review.

Other notables include *Rune*, *Zeus*, *Sacrifice* and *Insane*. Oh, and Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without a new *FIFA* game would it? EA hasn't disappointed and the franchise rolls on.

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% Here at **ZONE** we score every game out of 100. If a game receives the impressive score of 90 or above, it is awarded the **PC ZONE Classic** award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not really a fan of the genre.



80-89% Games that score 80-89 get the **PC ZONE Award For Excellence**. These are excellent examples of their type of game – and if you're a fan of the genre, you should definitely consider buying the title.



70-79% Any games scoring between 70-79 have just missed an Award For Excellence, but don't ignore them. The score is well above average and that means you're getting a great title that's worth the investment if you're a fan of the genre.

50-69% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre, though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-49% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre, or if you happen to see them at a hugely reduced price.

0-19% Games that score less than 20 should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged, then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.



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Sneaking and shooting the IGI way.

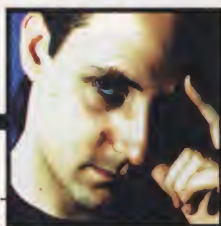
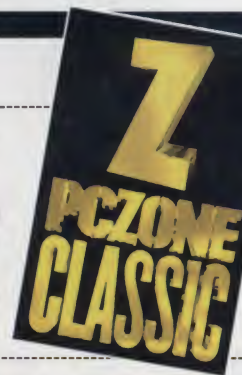
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IT'S A TOUGH CALL...

Under the **ZONE** scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights, and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described

as **PC ZONE Classics**. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all **ZONE Classics** are must-have titles (the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre), but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the

PC ZONE Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them. When we say a game is a *classic*, we really mean it!



MARTIN KORDA

GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Soccer Sim*.



STEVE HILL

GENRE Football, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Champ Manager 00/01*



PAUL PRESLEY

GENRE FPS, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Deus Ex* and *Counter-Strike*



KEITH PULLIN

GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Diablo II*



JAMES LYON

GENRE Action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force*



ADAM PHILLIPS

GENRE Action/RPG
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Deus Ex*

A Transformer, some Lego, a pogo stick, an Action Man and play dough.

A new job.

A Dukia Prague away kit.

A ticket to somewhere exotic so that I can get some boarding in.

Peace and love to all men, or preferably a BMW.

A big fat tax rebate would just make my year.

PROJECT IGI

★ £34.99 • Innerloop/Eidos • Out end of November/December

We've always said computer gamers should get out more, unfortunately *Richie Shoemaker* wasn't allowed out to play until he wrote his review

'Dear Santa, For Christmas I would like a new pair of gloves... and a *BigTrak*. Thanks. Love Dave.'

“ You can literally see so far into the distance that you half expect to eventually zoom into the back of your own head ”

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

Living in any city for a long period of time is bad for your health. For all the pubs and clubs in stumbling distance and the array of ponced-up snack bars offering half-cooked animal flesh, there's one aspect of living in the sweaty groin of England we call London that eventually can drive you to despair – and that's the lack of open countryside. Sure we have parks, filled as they are

with wide-eyed human wrecks and flanked by grey glass monoliths. But, as anyone who wears a flat cap and drinks real ale will tell you, there's nothing like standing atop a windswept hill, drinking in the view of a countryside that rolls into the distance while breathing in the fresh aroma of cow dung.

Likewise, ever since the genre was invented, games where you roam around trying to line up

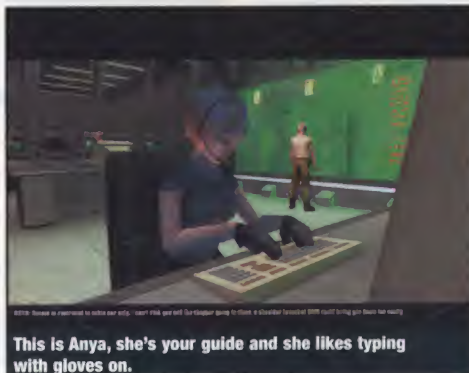
crosshairs with foreheads have been set exclusively within built-up urban jungles, across which for years we have been poked and prodded. Places where we are forced to tread across levels that form a continuous hallway of bleakness, punctuated only by windows that serve to let light in and little else out. Sure we've had fun playing them and occasionally still do. But, as all game players should know, it does us all good to

get out a little, even if in the case of *Project IGI*, we don't get to rub cheeks to see what the world outside our windows looks like.

Unlike the big guns of game development (id, Epic, Valve etc), Scandinavian-based Innerloop Studios is pretty new to this shooter lark. Creators of the mighty fine but somewhat dated *Joint Strike Fighter*, its flight sim heritage has in this case given them a different perspective



Not a good time to be stuck in the open.



This is Anya, she's your guide and she likes typing with gloves on.



"Hey, look out... Behind you!"

One of the biggest levels in a game we've ever seen – you can see two bases in this screen, but there are two more over the hill.

instead. It's almost as if Innerloop has handed us a return ticket out of town, away from the crowds of brain-dead shooters, to a place where we can stare into the horizon and eventually reach it. It almost makes you want to strip naked and run unencumbered into the great beyond and never come back. ➔

Not good, not good at all.

on such games where the action takes place at arm's length and ground level – and nowhere is this more evident than in the engine that powers *Project IGI*. Using a heavily modified version of the *Strike* engine, *IGI*'s levels are somewhat immense – 32km sq each, across all of which you are treated to some of the most spectacular views ever seen through a monitor. Through a pair

of binoculars or the scope of a sniper's rifle, you can literally see so far into the distance that you half-expect to zoom into the back of your own head. And what is particularly impressive is that the mountainous backdrops to the military bases you are sent to infiltrate are all rendered in real-time. Unlike other FPSs, you can if so wished throw your mission objectives aside and go hiking



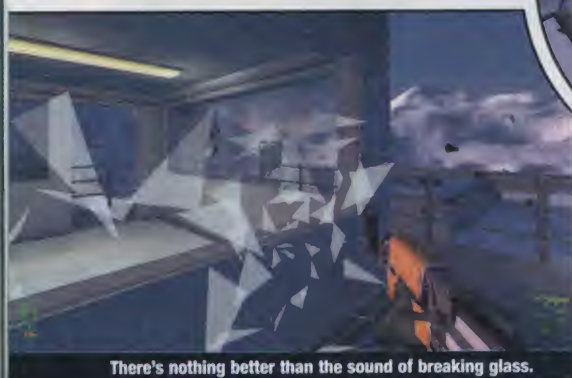
Check your 3D map to see if there are any guards around.



The desolation and vast open spaces are refreshing.



The cut-scenes are quite something.



There's nothing better than the sound of breaking glass.



If only you could fly the thing.



Hit the button to turn off the alarm – if it's not too late.



Many of the buildings have much the same architectural layout, which is a bit of a shame.

But, unfortunately, there's a job to do and, besides, the Baltic States that you're dispatched to are so cold that running around exposed is likely to fuse old man jack to your thigh.

THINK BEFORE YOU BLINK

Throughout *Project IGI* you play gaming's first ever Welshman, David Llewelyn Jones, ex-Para,

ex-SAS and now freelance behind-the-lines loner for the West's counter-nuclear terrorist unit. Being a specialist when it comes to the former Soviet Union, Jones is sent in to bring out Josef Priboi, an Estonian arms dealer who seems to be the only lead in the case of a stolen Russian warhead. Tracked to an old military airbase in the rugged hills

of Estonia, your job is to bring Priboi out alive with the minimum of fuss. But, as usual, things get complicated as you race across Eastern Europe to find the man.

Billed as a 'thinker shooter' (a genre publisher Eidos seem to have sole license on after two fantastic *Thief* games), *Project IGI* widens the pace set by less thoughtful games in that as well as violently dispatching your foe, to succeed you must also outwit them in true Bond style. Expertise in espionage and chatting up babes, however, is no guarantee for success, but a modicum of common sense – when to run for cover and when to run to mother – should see you through what is a very challenging game.

The general run of the game is familiar in the sense that it's you versus the world. And from the outset you are made well aware that you are anything but superhuman. Kill an enemy guard within sight of another and he'll run to raise the alarm, bringing dozens of red-capped and well-armed soldiers from their barracks.

Sneaking around the periphery, watching the patrol routes of guards and keeping an eye out for strategically-placed security cameras is what differentiates *IGI*, gameplay-wise from the likes of *Delta Force* and *Soldier Of Fortune* – and it's a mighty refreshing change.

While your enemies can to some extent rely on cameras to keep watch, they aren't the only ones who have technology on

their side. To help you as you dart from pillar to post is a map computer that offers a satellite link-up. Call up the 3D overhead map and not only will it show you any guards that happen to be in the open, but each and every security camera and their detection ranges as they sweep the area. You can zoom in and see which way the enemy soldiers are facing and even follow them as they make their rounds of the base. But inside

fetishist, I can't vouch for the realistic way in which the weapons look, sound and react. But they certainly do the trick, look suitably real and make all the right noises. Particularly impressive was the different kick each weapon had in the hand. And, after playing every first-person shooter, including *Diakotana*, in the last five years, I can officially announce that the Glock 17 is the best pistol I've fired in a game to date.

GOING IN ALONE

The multiplayer plans for *IGI*

Unfortunately, *Project IGI* is a single-player only game, but there are plans to include a multiplayer add-on at some point in the future, either as a patch or – similar to *SWAT 3*'s recent *Elite Edition* – as part of a special re-release in a few months. Considering the vast open spaces that make *IGI* unique, multiplayer games set across them are an enticing prospect for the future. We only hope that *Innerloop* can somehow squeeze enough players in – at least 32 – to fill them. A co-operative campaign would be a nice touch as well.



No multiplayer as yet. Bah!

“You must outwit foes in true Bond style. Expertise in spying and chatting up babes, however, is no guarantee for success”

buildings you're on your own, in familiar FPS territory once again and you must rely on your sense of timing and reflexes to surprise those guards that are inside.

Inevitably, of course, the time will come when the alarm is raised and, unless you can find an override switch within 30 seconds, the barrack will be emptied of restless soldiers eager to brighten their day and bring in your head. Although near impossible to complete once this happens, to abort and reload the mission at this stage would be to miss out on some wonderful action. Pinned into a corner, with soldiers all around picking away at your cover and bullets ricocheting around you, there is a tangible feeling of panic and dread as you try to think your way out of the frying pan and, inevitably, into the fire.

Not being much of a gun

But, unfortunately, the effects the weapons have on the enemy aren't quite as satisfying. Pinging off metal, gouging plaster and smashing through glass, the sound effects are wonderful and the graphics fairly convincing, but the movement of the enemy soldiers is far from impressive. Unless hit with a shotgun, enemy soldiers simply crumple to the floor when hit and have a very limited repertoire of death animations. After playing *Counter-Strike* for so long – a game that was made and released for free – it's unfortunate that those with more resources can't make a game that looks better in similar departments.

RUN TO THE HILLS

For the most part, the missions are engrossing and varied, and unlike so many games these days, actually get better. The aim

Say goodbye, sucker.

So far you've failed to get Josef out, let's see if these marines can do any better.

Just when you think it's all over, along come a couple of MIGs.

You won't find any health packs in this game. Even vital medical injections are rare enough.

See that mountain up there, you can go right up to the top. No, really.

The satellite image, unfortunately, doesn't show who's in the buildings.

That Christopher Walken gets everywhere.

in each is simply to reach a certain point on the map, although your options on how to get there are generally limited. Because of the vast terrain and the dynamic way that your enemies react to your actions, you are tricked into thinking you have a great deal of freedom.

Although realistic in setting, *Project IGI* isn't a particularly realistic game. Unlike, say, *SWAT 3* or to a lesser extent *Rogue Spear*, *IGI* is far from being a simulation of small arms conflict. As previously mentioned, guards react on sight and sound, but none of them it has to be said are particularly attentive. Miss your target with a silenced sniper rifle, for instance, and he'll stop in his tracks to figure out what the sound is. And rather than deduce that he might soon have a colossal

chunk missing from his head, he'll shrug off the threat much as he would as if he'd heard a twig snap from behind the bushes. Then, within a few seconds, he'll continue patrolling the compound with fearless abandon.

Likewise, if you let loose a few shots from a stolen AK-47, a particularly noisy weapon. You'd expect that the entire base would be alerted to the threat from such a racket. But for the sake of realism, what happens again is that usually only those under fire react. Although, if others are near enough or if they see you, they too will join in the fray.

As you progress, however, this aspect of annoyance soon fades once you realise *IGI* has sacrificed, quite rightly, realism for gameplay. It's a trade-off that evidently the developers have wrestled with ever since the game was first conceived. Although I remember not too long ago when enemy reactions were notched far higher than they have actually ended up and the game was nothing short of impossible to complete. Whether they have got the balance right is difficult to gauge, especially since the bulk of the game is set outdoors, but once you become used to what you can get away with, the game begins to open up considerably. What is impressive is the way your enemy will try and search you out if after detection you manage to find a hiding place. On one level, where a tank was patrolling a burnt-out village, I

was darting from wall to wall trying to keep out of sight as the turret scanned the landscape. Eventually it moved on, and as I ran across the mountains, a helicopter gunship appeared from which I managed to escape by tumbling down a cliff face and breaking my neck.

EYE SPY

As with most 3D shooters, *IGI* treats you to a lengthy 3D cut-scene before and after each mission. But where most attempts at dragging out a story are just small treats to reward our time and patience, *IGI*'s 3D sequences are small cinematic gems. Some are superbly directed to the extent that the game feels like one continuous whole rather than the series of linear missions that it is. The close-up views of the characters aren't particularly great. But to counter this, we see superbly modelled helicopters, fighter planes and trains weaving their way across the same terrain you have been or will be fighting across later.

During each mission the trickery continues, as by engaging in actions such as climbing ladders, hacking computers, picking locked doors, placing explosives or sliding down power cables we again see our hero, ex-SAS soldier David Jones, in third person. Innerloop call this Action Mode, but they are in effect cut-scenes where you can control the camera and as such extend the look and feel of game towards

more of a rollercoasting action flick than a simple action-orientated 3D shooter, as was the case in *Soldier Of Fortune*.

Though there are no multiplayer options to keep you playing past completion of the 14-mission single-player campaign (plans are afoot to correct this omission), *IGI* offers a hell of a lot more variation than *Soldier Of Fortune*'s simple concoction of violent real-world action. However, what sets *IGI* apart is the sense of immersion within a believable storyline and the way in which it all travels along seamlessly at a

perfect pace. When you reach the later levels and find yourself standing on a ridge after blowing up an enemy base and finding another up ahead, then you'll know what I mean. [A]

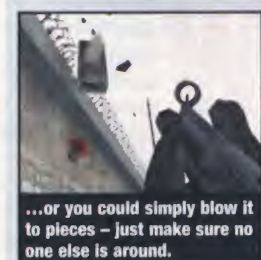
THE CAMERA ALWAYS DIES



There's only one way to get past a security camera...



...If it spots you, you have only a few seconds to get out the way...



...or you could simply blow it to pieces - just make sure no one else is around.

IN PERSPECTIVE

It's a very close call between *IGI* and *MSG*, but where *MSG* shades it for sneaking around, *IGI* beats *Metal Gear* hands down when it comes to action, and the sheer scale of the levels is second to none. For sheer unadulterated violence, of course, *Soldier Of Fortune* is just the ticket.

Soldier Of Fortune

Project IGI

Metal Gear Solid

Delta Force 2

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII-266
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
3D graphics accelerator **WE SAY** PIII,
128Mb RAM, Voodoo 3/GeForce card or
equivalent, plus 3D soundcard are
required for a decent performance

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Well-paced missions that mix action with stealth • Huge outdoor levels that take the breath away • Fantastic use of sound • Excellent 3D cut-scenes

DOWNERS Character movement a little stilted • Can't save your progress mid-level • no multiplayer options as yet • Some unconvincing AI behaviour

85 *Soldier Of Fortune* meets *Metal Gear Solid*



A dragon can be a good ally if you find one.



A magical insect. Yesterday.



A blue soul on the battlefield.



The spell effects are impressive.



Your forces lay siege to an enemy wizard's manalith.

SACRIFICE

★ £34.99 • Interplay • Out December

Keith Pullin tries to be impressed with the latest Shiny offering, and harder still not to mention Elton John. He fails...

Whenever a game from Shiny Entertainment lands in the office, we cast aside whatever slack-jawed interactive pursuit we're currently engaged with and saunter over to the lucky reviewer's desk for a long, lingering look.

Usually, we're not disappointed – after all, the

developer that gave us *Messiah* and *MDK* is renowned for knowing exactly what makes a gamer tick. So, it came as quite a surprise to find that in the case of the latest epic blockbuster from Laguna Beach, California, office opinion is divided.

There's no denying that when it comes to visual titillation, *Sacrifice*'s superiority over virtually everything else

around is clear. The vast, undulating landscapes are pure works of art, some of the effects for the spells outdo the explosive glory of even *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament*, and the sheer graphical diversity of enemies available (there are more than 50) is outrageous. If you have the latest graphics card and a desire to show it off in a hurry, *Sacrifice* is the game you need, although you're going to need a monster system to get it running properly.

If, on the other hand, you're looking for something with a bit of depth and lasting appeal you

may not find what you're looking for here. You see, this is a game that is apparently a wholesome eclectic mix of real-time strategy, RPG and raw shoot 'em-up action (according to the Website and various press releases anyway). The truth is very different. There are slight hints of RTS and RPG, but in reality *Sacrifice* is a glorified third-person shooter and nothing else.

OH MY GOD

You play the part of a wizard who finds himself stranded on a new world after inadvertently

IN PERSPECTIVE

Limited and repetitive gameplay ruins what could easily have been a game to give *Giants* a run for its money. Still, *Sacrifice* is a good little shooter for a while, but soon frustrates.

GIANTS

SACRIFICE

MESSIAH

EVOLVA



Although 'insectoid' in appearance, this is a wizard.

An angry enemy wizard is not a pretty sight.



The red line indicates creatures that have been tethered to a manolith in order to protect it.



Not a good place to stand as not one, not two, but three wizards battle for supremacy.

destroying his own. Ruling over this newfound dominion are five very different gods. There's Pyro, God of Fire; Persephone, God of Life; James, God of Earth; Stratos, God of Air; and, finally, Charnel, God of Death.

Residing in their lofty kennels high above the chaos of the world below, the gods bicker constantly about the best way to run the planet. Your arrival adds a new dimension to their thoughts and so they decide to use your skills for their own sly gain.

At first you can accept missions from any god you like. During these early tests you are given a myriad of choices in order for the Gods to work out what kind of a being you are: destroy a village or save the village; chase a rogue wizard or

leave him alone, for example. We're talking basic good/evil dilemmas that affect your alignment and ultimately, the outcome of the whole game.

As things progress and you gradually veer towards the philosophies of one particular god, access to the others is denied as war between the five divinities erupts. A few moral twists and turns are added to make you wonder whether or not you've made the correct divine affinity, and some demons and other characters drop by to keep you on your pointy wizard toes.

SHORT-TERM HIT

The delights of gnomes, fire-breathing phoenixes, basilisks and other AD&D-inspired denizens is bound to appeal to a vast amount of

gamers. You can even nurture your own monsters so that they, as well as you, advance levels after reaching a certain amount of kills. It all sounds like a right laugh and to a certain extent it is, for a couple of hours anyway. At that point you realise that regardless of the god you follow

“You are eventually reduced to creating monster after monster, and then sitting back and hoping that your minions will win”

or the creatures under your control, all of the missions are virtually identical.

The sequence of events on any level tends to go along these lines: firstly, you convert all mana fountains into manoliths in order to gain power; secondly, you kill all enemies and steal their souls;

next you convert the collected souls into new creatures to serve you; and finally, you take your entourage of reincarnated minions to an enemy wizard's altar and desecrate it to win the level. It's then on to the next mission where you repeat the process again.

Another problem is trying to work out who's who during a battle. Creatures tend to mass together in one huge brawling blur of colour. Attempting to select any of your units in the hope of making some kind of tactical play isn't as straightforward as it should be,

especially when you can't even find the mouse pointer. The problem is alleviated to an extent by using hotkeys to command your troops, but still, you can't help thinking that there's got to be an easier way.

You are eventually reduced to creating monster after monster, and then sitting back and hoping that eventually your minions will win. That's really the limit of *Sacrifice's* real-time strategy. Is that the kind of gameplay that's likely to draw in hardened RTS players, or indeed promote any kind of lasting appeal? Probably not.

POSITIVELY FRAUGHT

Sacrifice can offer long-term excitement in a multiplayer capacity, though. Here you can log on to the Internet or set up a





The blue soul shows you how many souls you currently have to play with.



Desecrating enemy altars is a joyous occasion that brings the whole town out.



George, Bungle and Zippy never make an appearance.



Flashes on the horizon signify your altar is under attack.



If you die you should head back to one of your manoliths.

← LAN and choose from five different games, which include Allied, Soul Harvest, Slaughter, Domination and Skirmish. There's no denying that playing against a human opponent

“Once you’ve desecrated your 20th or so altar, you do start wondering if there are better things to do with your time”

adds an element of surprise and unpredictability, which you otherwise wouldn't get if you stuck solely with the single-player game.

So there you have it. *Sacrifice* seems to have it all

on the surface: loads of spells, trolls, wizards, gnomes, goblins, dragons, gods, devils, demons... It even boasts the almost unheard of trait of having decent voice-overs. Humour, of course,

tends to be evident in most Shiny games, and again, *Sacrifice* is no exception to that rule. Charnel in particular is master of the one-liner, and James' uncanny resemblance to the legendary *Earthworm Jim* is bound to put

a wry smile on your face.

Sacrifice even throws a fair amount of gore into the equation. A lot of your time is spent wading through gibbed body parts and bloodstained valleys. Après-battle scenes are reminiscent of the Somme, and if you could build trenches, a fearsome recreation of WWI would be complete.

Oh yes, *Sacrifice* throws the lot at you, there's no denying that. Unfortunately, all the frills in the world can't hide the fact that there really isn't much on offer here. There's only a limited amount of fun that can be had from continually creating a gang

of monsters and then watching them hurl, boulders, rocks and other stuff at a relentless stream of surreal pixies and goblins. Similarly, once you've desecrated your 20th or so altar, you do start wondering if there are better things you could be doing with your time.

In short, *Sacrifice* is another top-quality shooter from Shiny Entertainment, but when it comes to getting the RTS and RPG elements right, you need look no further than Interplay's *Giants* for an example of how it should be done. So, nice try Shiny, but we think your 'epic' is still to come... [C]

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 300
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb or better D3D accelerated video card
WE SAY PIII 500 with 128Mb RAM and
GeForce 2 video card. At least

PCZ VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Colourful effects • Five multiplayer games • Interesting plot
↓ **DOWNERS** Boring and repetitive
• Confusing interface

62 Good for a quick blast, but lacks variety

WALKTHROUGH

IN SEARCH OF MANA

Stepping into a strange new world...



1 Zyzyx, your ever-present bird helper, informs you that the first thing you need to do is find some mana. That blue flame is a mana fountain and is where your new wizard must go. Note the rangers in the distance too – you can pick them up on the way.



2 After picking up the four rangers (look at the creatures box on the left of the screen) you continue towards the mana fountain. Once next to it you can cast the manolith spell (bottom-left spell icon) to change the mana fountain into your own exclusive power source.



3 During exploration of his surroundings our wizard has come across some creatures controlled by an enemy wizard. Your minions should automatically start attacking them. While they're doing this you can claim another mana fountain, just head towards the blue arrow on the radar.



4 After killing enemy creatures in battle, cast the convert spell on the red souls to claim the soul as your own. A little creature falls out the sky and then drags the soul all the way back to your altar to be cleansed. You can then use it to create more of your own monsters.

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MICROPROSE

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PORT

I'VE BEEN

GAME I
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We tell you how

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Out 19th October

NEW!

GUNLOK

★ £34.99 • Interplay • Out December

Although a great fan of semiotics, Mark Hill finds there's one icon too many here

You could say there are two types of games. Those that try and draw you into the experience to the point where you forget you are playing a game and those who make no apologies for being an artificially and often abstract set of parameters for you to play with. Almost every computer game made these days attempts to disguise itself with enough sophistication, or at least enough natural pointers, to make it seem real. Rebellion's *Gunlok* rebels against this wave of pretenders by going back to the primitive language of the old-skool arcade game. There's enough iconic information on

that shows their hearing range and a great big energy bar to show how many shots it will take to destroy them. Almost everything on screen is colour coded, from the enemy signs to the bright dyes of your own team of rusty robots. There are no tactical battles per se, more choreographed shoot-outs planned out in the active pause mode to get you through to the next bit of the map. In a sense, it works like a complex version of *Donkey Kong* or *Frogger* (or almost any other old arcade game). But therein lies the main problem with the game. The beauty of those old classics lay in their simplicity. You had to learn

“Enemies have so much visual information dripping from them, you're barely able to see the scrap of metal underneath”

screen to make any *Pac-Man* clone look starved in comparison. And, although *Gunlok* defies tight categorisation, it comes across as a mixture of *Commandos* and *Metal Gear Solid*.

ICON SEE CLEARLY NOW

It presents itself as strategy game, in real-time, but with a very necessary pause function, where you must solve each part of the map you move across. Enemies have so much visual information dripping from them, you're barely able to see the scrap of metal underneath. They also have a moving cone that delimits their visual range, an expanding circle

to be good at them, but you could master the dynamics immediately. *Gunlok* is at times so fastidiously complicated and elaborate, it's hardly any fun to play.

SCRAPHEAP CHALLENGE

Commandos' biggest problem was that it was too damn hard for you to get any real pleasure out of it, while *Gunlok's* is that it's too artificial for you to care either way. *Commandos* was set in a recognisably real world, with a historical background and human enemies. *Gunlok* is set in yet another *Terminator*-type of future, where computers and robots have taken over the world and a small pocket of humanity, led by *Gunlok*, is rebelling (there's that word again) against them. The plot is a perfect summary of the game: a synthetic and unnatural world that works robotically against your human abilities. To balance this you are given some natural signs, such as *Gunlok's* face and *Elint's* robotic limp (which makes it irritatingly slow), but there's just not enough. The story ends up working as an excuse for instructions on how to solve a particular level and it's hard to get interested in it. The cut-scenes that drive it along are clumsy too,



Give commands in the active pause mode and watch them run like rabid mice.



In game language what's going on here translates as "ghghfwth's". Approximately.



Not much detail in the buildings as you can see.



Shoot things. They explode. Don't you just love causality?

and the whole game works like a school-project electrical circuit.

The engine has its problems too, and is quite clunky to manoeuvre. The zoom lets you get as uncomfortably close to the characters as you want, which lets you see how every nut and bolt is assembled together. There's a first-person view that can be accessed (a bit like the one in *Metal Gear Solid* and not as good as the one in *Vampire*), but it does little to enhance the gameplay.

Rebellion should be praised for doing something a bit different to the flood of other strategy games out there, even if it ultimately doesn't end up working. There will certainly be some among you who will relish every minute of this challenge, but for the rest of us, *Gunlok* is a hard game to get into and an easy game to leave alone. [B]



This guy's a real mess.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** A P350 and a 16Mb 3D card

IN PERSPECTIVE

Like *Odium*, *Gunlok* is likely to disappear without making too much noise and, although it's not as frustrating as *Commandos*, we'd wait for *Pyro's* sequel next year.

COMMANDOS

METAL GEAR SOLID

GUNLOK

ODIUM

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Tries something different • Will appeal to engineers and fans of *Robot Wars* • Nice tactical touches

DOWNERS Too artificial to maintain interest • Engine never works the way you want it too • A lot of graphical detail close up, but naked on the outside

60

Slightly gun-locked

RUNE



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Lose a wheel. Hit a wall. Just blow up, will you?



Not the most exciting of races.



Look, there's nonce-face out in front.



Hah, you just wait until I'm through with them.



Poncy rich gits.

F1 MANAGER

★ £29.99 • EA Sports • Out now

There aren't many people who can combine hi-tech auto sports with cabalistic ritualism, but Paul Presley's never been afraid of a challenge

Michael Schumacher. Mr S. Schumi. Long-term readers of this tawdry little organ may be aware of something we call... The Curse Of Zone (dramatic chord, lightning strikes, horse whinnies in the distance). It seems that more often than not, whenever we mention the name of a well-known personage, between the time the copy is edited and passed on for production and the actual printing of the magazine, said human suffers a major disaster. In the past we've tried to use this power only for good – usually by mentioning Jim Davidson as often as possible, but somehow the fiend is immune.

However, I'm taking it upon myself to invoke whatever power the voodoo gods have vested in us to rid ourselves of that modern blight on Formula One racing – Michael Schumacher. OK, so the man may be able to drive through an earthquake and still break lap records, but he shouldn't have

cheated good, honest British drivers out of victory two seasons in a row. Hopefully, assuming our cabalistic powers are up to scratch, Schumacher will be exposed for cheating in Malaysia and dumped out of the Championship (*Unfortunately not – Up-To-The-Minute Ed.*).

OH MICKEY, YOU'RE SO FINE...

The first thing I did on taking control of Ferrari in *F1 Manager* was to sack him and bring in good old Johnny Herbert (it would have

“The first thing I did on taking control of Ferrari in *F1 Manager* was to sack Michael Schumacher and bring in Johnny Herbert”

been Jensen Button, but the game starts at the '99 season, which is bloody annoying. Stewart Racing still hasn't been taken over by Jaguar and Damon Hill is still mooching about at Arrows). Least I would have done, but sadly the game is not that open. Once you pick a team you're stuck with the drivers you're given for at

least one season and can only negotiate with different choices for the following year. Still, I hoped that by shunning Schumacher and refusing to listen to his emails he might get the message and bugger off on his own. A word about those emails: a year or so ago, I berated MicroProse's F1 management effort for its cumbersome front end. EA seems to have been listening, as there's a much more organised system here. Emails can be sorted by category, making it easy to keep track of what needs to be done in each section.

Unfortunately, this whole area once again highlights the fundamental problem with *F1* management games (all two of them) – there's not really all that

advertiser's stickers and which pencil case company gets your official merchandise contract.

... YOU'RE SO FINE, YOU BLOW MY MIND

Where you do have to put in some effort is during race weekends. Mainly this results in adjusting the car's set up to suit each driver, although again this isn't really that much of a challenge, and instead is little more than an extended version of that old parlour classic *Mastermind*. Unfortunately, despite my steadfast attempts to make life as uncomfortable as possible for the German automaton, he still managed to cruise easily to victory in the first few races, despite my orders for him to ease off and pit every two laps.

And that's perhaps the biggest problem with the game. No matter what you do, you never really feel as though you're making much difference to anything. There is always a lot going on, but you never seem to feel attached to any of it. Everything is pretty much taken care of for you throughout. Plus it seems to get some basic things wrong – races continuing for several laps after the winner crosses the line for instance, a random TV view that consistently fails to catch any of the important

IN PERSPECTIVE

You're really spoiled for choice here. *Grand Prix World* by MicroProse is marginally worse than EA's attempt and doesn't have the familiar spit and shine that we've come to expect from the sporting behemoths.

Grand Prix World

F1 Manager

Managing Your Bank Balance

moments in a race no matter how much you set it up. However, it is polished enough and, despite the faults, is more playable than the MicroProse effort. But you still can't help wishing EA had included more of a game somewhere along the way.

Oh yeah, Michael Schumacher, Michael Schumacher, Michael Schumacher... **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
2Mb video card **WE SAY** Pentium 400, 128Mb
RAM, D3D card

PCZ VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Comprehensive • Looks pretty • Nice birds on the loading screen
↓ **DOWNERS** You don't get much say in anything • Annoying TV cameras • Not up to date

60 Frank Williams doesn't have it this easy

RUNE

★ £34.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out now

Keith Pullin grows a long, natty ginger beard and loses his head over *Rune*

Human Head Studios is concentrating on one thing – and one thing only with *Rune* – and that is total savagery. Those looking for a thought-provoking tale based on ancient Norse Legend can get their bony arses down to the library because, aside from the odd reference to Odin, Loki, Midgard and Ragnarok, all you're going to get here is unrivalled decapitation and gore.

But it takes a while for the blood to get pumping; the opening levels are bogged down with irritating platform sections that scream *Tomb Raider* at you over and over again. Perseverance is the key, though, and after the thousandth pixel-perfect jump in a row, your patience is rewarded.

ON THE TRAIL OF BLOOD

Rune manages to combine simple puzzle solving and calculated violence in a disturbingly satisfying way. One of the press releases waved in our direction claims the split is about 70-30 per cent in favour of action – and that's about spot on. The same press release suggests the puzzles in *Rune* are "the most fun and violent way to get from A to B". Again, that's something we cannot argue with

– even if a lot of them are based on the *Deathtrap Dungeon* philosophy of fireballs, spinning blades and falling blocks.

In fact, *Rune* offers some seriously addictive gameplay. The seamless way in which mindless slaughter blends into thoughtful adventuring is not something we see often. What makes it even more surprising is the way *Rune* achieves this degree of excellence with only a

absolute doddle to master. The only annoying thing is that there isn't a quick turn-around key – well, we couldn't find one, anyway.

SWIVEL

Aside from testing the sharpness of your axe and sword, you can use runes. These magical stones give you spells like Shield, Blast, Spirit and Bloodlust. To be honest, the only ones that are of any real use are the latter two: Spirit, because it makes you semi-invisible; and Bloodlust, because it turns you into a frenzied maniac.

“Those looking for a thought-provoking tale based on ancient Norse legend, can forget it, all you're going to get here is unrivalled gore”

few enemy species. After three days of playing, a grand total of six kinds of adversary were spotted. Obviously this doesn't say much for variation, but it encourages fluid gameplay allowing the player to go straight for the weak point and send heads bouncing down the corridor with relative ease. At one point our hero Ragnar even managed to lop off three heads with one swing. Now when you pull off a manoeuvre like that you can't help but wallow in glorious psychotic pride.

It doesn't take long to master that kind of depravity either, *Rune's* control interface is an

In reality, *Rune* is gimmick central. The way Ragnar swivels his head to look at something of interest is an especially nice (*Grim Fandango*) touch and can be used to find secret passages, switches and hidden food. Interaction with your environment doesn't stop there either. Our Scandinavian pillager can set fire to inanimate objects and living things, as well as smash barrels, wooden benches and pretty much anything else that gets in his way.

Aesthetically, *Rune* rocks. With a modified version of the *Unreal Tournament* engine at work here, the graphical style is immensely



You often feel scared and alone as you wander through this cavernous hell.



Be prepared for unparalleled violence at every turn.



This could be a typical encounter with a mutant fish off any Cornwall cliff.



The atmosphere is tense and menacing with *Deathtrap Dungeon*-style horror.



There are lots of sharp axes and swords to test on your enemies.



Ragnar can set both inanimate objects and living things on fire.



Use the Spirit magical stone to make yourself semi-invisible.



A journey of endless gore and mindless violence at every step of the way.



This game rocks – *Rune's* hero Ragnar manages to lop off limbs with one deft swing.

IT COULD COST YOU AN ARM AND A LEG

How to perform major surgery on your enemies...



This goblin is one of the first humanoids you come across and probably your first opportunity to sever some limbs. The trick is to be patient, so wait until he gets close enough...



...And then limbs strike and go for the kill! But, unfortunately, it's only an arm this time or maybe something disposable like an ear, but with practice heads will roll.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Despite a few limitations, *Rune* is still incredibly good fun. Whether it holds its own against the sensational looking *Severance* when that's eventually released remains to be seen. But for now, if you want to dismember something, *Rune* offers plenty of limbs and gameplay to be going on with.

DEATHTRAP DUNGEON

HERETIC II

RUNE

atmospheric. Although some of the character's shadows occasionally point towards the light-source – strange but true. The general mood of the game is enhanced further by plenty of low moans and screams that permeate through the caverns and tunnels around you.

SO WHAT'S THE SCORE?

Rune is definitely a great game, but the suspicion is it could have been a lot better. As we said at the start of this review, the opening stages are almost unforgivably irritating. Too few enemies may also prove to be its undoing in some critical quarters.

On a slightly different note, there could have been some friendly characters in there to help you out. As it is, you often feel alone as you wander through the caverns of hell, but obviously that doesn't apply to the multiplayer version of the game, which is a fairly enjoyable deathmatch affair. But our gripes are minor as this crude lesson in Viking culture deserves to do well. If you need to let off some steam this Christmas, *Rune* is what you need. **PC**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 300
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
850Mb HD Space **WE SAY** PIII 500 or
preferably more, with 128Mb RAM
and Geforce 2 3D accelerator card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Smooth control • Nice graphics and effects • Interesting multiplayer • Addictive gameplay
DOWNERS Dull opening stages • Very platformy in places

79 Best Viking game on the PC

WALKTHROUGH

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Completing training and choosing your weapons is essential before descending into hell...



1 The newly appointed defender of the village finally arrives at the Longhouse. Ragnar must go through this door to complete his training.



2 Ragnar chooses his weapons and finds a shield before venturing into the training room proper. Ulf has one more test for our wannabe hero – but what could it be?



3 Ragnar has to fight Ulf in order to prove his manliness. It's no easy task.



4 Ulf is the village's best warrior. The only way to defeat him is to keep dodging left and right. But if you're not fast enough to move out of the way, use your shield.



5 With your training complete, it's off to fend for yourself in the big, wide world...

FIFA 2001

★ £29.99 • EA Sports • Out now

Accurate to the second, here are EA Sports with the biggest football game of the year.

Carlos Ruiz offers some in-depth analysis

Football simulations are destined to accurately resemble the real-life game, but EA has been making remarkably slow progress with its infamous *FIFA* series. Each of the five titles in the last couple of years has been a predictable exercise in evolution rather than revolution. And with EA being the only developer churning out decent football games for the PC at the moment, it will be a long and agonising wait for truly realistic examples.

Don't get us wrong, though, as far as player animation goes, *FIFA 2001* is definitely up there with the best of them. You can pull off tricks galore and the movement is impressively fluid and authentic. In fact, the general presentation and quality of graphics and sound are pretty much unsurpassed. However, the gameplay is still very reminiscent of the last outing, bar some minor improvements and tweaks, and so seasoned

FIFA experts will start pretty much where they left off.

All the usual options and customisations are available and, of course, everything has been

a more enjoyable experience on the whole.

FOUL PLAY

In real life, conceded goals are generally attributable to one of three factors: inadequate defending, bad luck, or just a piece of extraordinarily good play by the opposition. In *FIFA 2001*,

“Everyone knows what to expect from a new *FIFA* these days and it seems EA are doing their best to live up to these expectations”

brought bang up to date in terms of players, kits and so on. There are real linesmen on the touchline, added graphics for the players' tunnel and better crowd noises, making for increased atmosphere and

however, especially on harder difficulties, the computer often seems 'destined' to score, and duly does so in a quite unfair way. Whenever it takes the fancy, the computer can

suddenly run and pass far faster than you could ever hope to, and score from impossible positions. A perfect way to combat such disappointment is to score goals yourself, and there are countless ways in which to do so. However, the most popular methods include bicycle kicks from corners and crosses, and weaving through the defence before planting one in the top corner. Just another example of how far football games have to go before achieving true realism.

Thankfully, these two minor criticisms do not affect the playability as a whole, as *FIFA 2001* is still undoubtedly the best and most fun football title on the PC. Until *ISS* makes its way to the best games platform, we're going to have to accept it – warts and all. Having said that, despite the unrealistic tricks, there are no obvious weaknesses in any area of the game and this contributes to its overall quality. Everyone should know what to expect from a new *FIFA* these days, and it seems EA is doing its best to live up to these expectations. **PCW**

Looks like someone scored.



The graphics are especially good when you notch up the resolution.



The Dutch, playing dirty as usual.



Stam gets stuck in – the stupid daft automaton.

IN PERSPECTIVE

FIFA 2001 has the edge over its predecessors, just. Obviously, with the latest stats, players and kits, as well as all the other improvements, it's the one to go for, and choosing an older version with a lower price tag would be a very brave decision. If you already have *FIFA 2000*, then we can neither recommend it nor advise you against it. It's up to you, man.

FIFA 2001

EURO 2000

FIFA 2000

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** 400MHz CPU with 64Mb of RAM and a nice graphics card should do the trick. Don't forget the gamepads

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS Immaculate presentation • Superb player animation • Commentary from the pros • Improved atmosphere • Great gameplay, especially in multiplayer
- DOWNERS Not entirely dissimilar to *FIFA 2000* • Computer goals seem unfair at times • Scoring options are not as varied as some may like


83 Still the champion. A score of 70 if you've got a previous version

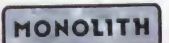
Fall for her and you won't get up.



Be the sexiest spy ever with guns, gadgets and cool locations galore.

THE OPERATIVE.

 **No One
Lives
Forever**



© 2000 Monolith Productions, Inc and Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. Fox Interactive, The Operative, No One Lives Forever and their associated logos are the trademarks of Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. Lith Tech is a trademark of Monolith Productions, Inc.

This futuristic version of a heavy machine gun is perfect for mowing down cowboys.

The tank is dead easy to control and is extremely powerful.

You can give these subordinates orders to follow you, but you're mostly left on your own.

The interface to change a weapon's mode of fire works a treat.

What is it about Xen creatures having only one eye?

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

★ £34.99 • Havas Interactive • Out December

The game that came out of nowhere arrives all guns blazing. Mark Hill finds out whether it can live up to its 'official Half-Life product' tag

The Tree of Life is a common theme in world mythology. From the one described in Genesis to the date palm in ancient Egypt, it's been a popular symbol for eternal life, a miraculous entity whose fruit grants immortality and under whose shadow lies the rest of creation.

In gaming there is the Tree of *Half-Life*, from whom springs life eternal in the shape of add-ons, mods and total conversions. No game since Valve's classic has come close to having the impact it did on the PC games scene, though. Its roots have dug deep beneath the gaming consciousness, and it has been left to its bastard children, such as *Counter-Strike*, to truly carry on the line. These branches have grown out with such vigour and success that Havas is now legitimising the bastards and welcoming them to the

paternal fold with open arms.

After being the darling of almost every online player in the world, not to mention the *ZONE* office, *Counter-Strike* is to receive a solo release in the coming months. Before that, however, is a game almost unheard of until a couple of months ago. A game that was originally intended as a free total conversion until it was seen at this year's E3.

Gunman Chronicles has been developed by a bunch of people scattered all over the globe going by the name of Rewolf, and it's a shining example of how much vitality the mod community has injected into this often limp, marketing-led industry.

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

WHAT'S THIS THEN?

Opposing Force was one of the greatest add-ons in the history of add-ons for one of the greatest games in the history of games. Yet there was something about it that left us disenchanted. The expectations were so great that we couldn't help but be disappointed in something that was essentially identical to its predecessor. The good bits were fantastic moments of tense gaming that will be forever etched on our defective memories. The bad bits were long strolls through corridors admiring areas of the Black Mesa complex we hadn't already seen through the eyes of Gordon Freeman. It was a great idea: play *Half-Life* again as one of the army soldiers sent in to sort out the mess, paralleling Gordon's movements, fighting aliens and black ops and even crossing paths with the man himself. The only problem was that we had already played it before and that there were no stunningly new ideas in there. It was successful more thanks to *Half-Life*'s enduring replayability than to its own innovations.

Step in *Gunman*. Set in a futuristic universe inhabited by

similar aliens to the ones that came from *Xen*, it certainly has enough new ideas to make it a worthwhile addition to the *Half-Life* series and be stamped with the official Valve seal of approval.

The Xenome, obviously the cousin race of the *Xen*, have been wreaking devastation on every planet they've laid their slimy tendrils on. The only people who can stop them are the Gunmen – sci-fi gunslingers determined to bring criminals to justice and a sticky end. Your role is as one of the more prominent space sheriffs, about to be left alone to battle it out against the Xenome and some evil humans.

Both the story and the presentation are right out of the comic book school of design. You have these gunmen, who are like cowboy versions of *Starship Troopers* (a sort of space sheriffs if you like). You have enemies who actually wear cowboy hats. And you have a barrage of ideas,



Big stomping creatures make a welcome comeback.

★ WALKTHROUGH

A NEW STATION IN LIFE

Not as impressive as getting into the Black Mesa complex, *Gunman*'s station is still a great way to get into the game



You'll also encounter mammoth monsters that require some slight puzzle-solving to get past.

tributes and references giving a nod and a wink to the seasoned games' player. *Gunman Chronicles* takes the idea that *Star Wars* was a western in space and gives it the *Half-Life* treatment. Because, above and beyond, this is still a *Half-Life* game. It may have started its existence as a TC, but the final product is as inspired and as polished as anything you could hope for. All the textures are new,

driven cut-scenes (something the original *Half-Life* never had, but which seems standard practice for total conversions) that betrays the amateur nature of the game.

A SLICE OF LIFE

You begin the game aboard a spaceport which acts as a base for the gunmen and, despite everything looking completely different, you feel you're on

docking, machinery in operation and even other people moving about in other sections. When you arrive at your destination you get to listen to a pep talk addressed to all the gunmen before things 'start to go wrong' in the way things always do in the *H-L* universe. *Gunman* uses this not as the entry point to the action but, quite cleverly, to teach you how the game works. It dispenses in this way with what was always a clumsy device: the separate training level (the straight-forward Hazard Course in *Half-Life* and the amusing *Full Metal Jacket*-inspired Boot Camp in *Opposing Force*). Veterans of first-person shoot 'em ups might complain that this is an insult to their intelligence and that it makes you go through a routine you already know all too well. However, because it's so seamlessly blended in with the game (instructions are given out by

“Gunman is supposed to be good fun above everything else. It's about big monsters, big guns and large amounts of gore”

all the humans, monsters and miscellaneous creatures are new, all the environments are new and all the weapons are new. Everything from the detail in the scenery to the design of the creatures and the gun animations bleed professionalism. It's only the awkwardness of certain engine-

familiar territory. You are initially restricted to a lift pod that transports you through the station, with a screen getting you up to date with the story's background and the windows on either side giving you a perfect view of a working, moving, living space structure. You can watch ships

engineers or trapped soldiers you walk past) you don't actually notice too much that you're being taught the basics of the game. Right from the start, *Gunman* follows in the footsteps of Valve's masterpiece by putting you in a believable environment that exists outside the game's story.

GUNS FOR HIRE

Because of the comic book style

of things, the world *Rewolf* has created isn't quite as believable as Valve's, and you never feel the same identification with this faceless *Gunman* as you did with Gordon Freeman. But the important thing to remember is that *Gunman* is supposed to be good fun above everything else. It's about big monsters, big guns and large amounts of gore. A perfect example of this is the

SOME GUNS, MAN

Despite being futuristic laser-type weapons, the guns in *GC* are extremely satisfying to use, much more so than in *Elite Force*. Not only that, each weapon has various modes of fire, each one suitable for different occasions. Here are a couple of examples.

PISTOL

Featuring three modes of fire, the pistol is your standard gunman side weapon. In normal fire mode it emits powerful beams of energy, but you can also use it to send devastatingly large blasts or set it to rapid fire. Watch that ammo going down, though



BEAMGUN

Not very effective in the heat of battle, the beamgun's advantage is being able to pick off opponents from far away by keeping the ray of energy focused on them until they blow. You can alter its power, its range and its voltage.



SNIPER RIFLE

Powerful though it is, the sniper rifle lacks any form of subtlety and won't afford you any sort of stealth. But then *GC* isn't about stealth.



ROCKETS

Although they can be used with a Multiple Unit Launch Engine (M.U.L.E.) to devastating effect, you can also use them individually as grenades. They can be timed or set as trip-laser mines and can even be set as cluster grenades.



1 The view from your pod's window shows the outside of a beautiful space station in working order. Don't blink or you'll miss something.



2 *Gunman* also has a sense of humour. This bloke waves at you from his workstation through the glass as you pass over him.



3 These are your fellow gunmen. Expect to be shouted at a lot. And remember that large statue, you'll be seeing him in person very soon.



4 Predictably enough, something goes wrong and the station goes to red alert.



5 Learn all the moves as ceilings cave-in on engineers and panels explode causing third-degree burns in maintenance workers.

END

← localised damage Rewolf has introduced, allowing skilled marksmen to blow the head off human enemies. Not in the same league as *Soldier Of Fortune* in terms of bloody violence, but then there is much more of a game behind the bloodshed. It is a licensed *Half-Life* game after all. It has scripted moments in abundance, it has brilliant set pieces and tough opponents. You stumble across scenes of

pushing that 23 per cent a little bit more. Those are the kind of moments *Gunman* is aiming to recreate. And, in many ways, it succeeds in creating them. Not as expertly realised as those in *Half-Life*, but enjoyable all the same. Human enemies all run, take cover, roll over and take the best firing position available to them, ensuring every battle is different no matter how many times you go through it. They even kick you in

“Gunman is an almost obligatory purchase for the legions of trigger happy gamers”

aliens fighting each other, dinosaurs shredding each other's necks, scientists getting their heads bitten off and common enemies making your life easier by killing each other off – as they did in *Opposing Force*. We haven't come across anything as challenging or admirable as the black ops from *Half-Life*, but it still partakes from the greatest AI found in any 3D engine. The best moments in *Half-Life* (and *Opposing Force*) were those where the game quietly saved itself before entering a new area with 23 per cent health and a low ammo count. You'd go in and, before you knew what was going on, your body would already have been blown up by a precise grenade, ripped to pieces by bullets or had its head whistled off. And then you'd go in again, and again, getting a bit further, eliminating one more ninja,

the teeth if you get too close. Alien creatures also show a greater degree of intelligence than we're normally used to by hiding out of reach from your gunfire and coordinating their attacks.

Considering the desolate state of the first-person shooter market, with only *Voyager: Elite Force* having been released in recent history (*Deus Ex* is on another plane of existence altogether), *Gunman Chronicles* is an almost obligatory purchase for the legions of trigger happy gamers who like a single-player story. Forget the fact that it started out as a total conversion. With the money pumped in by Havas and the help Rewolf has had from Valve, *Gunman* has matured into a fantastic sci-fi shooter. [A-]

THE MOD SQUAD

They might spend unhealthy amounts of time in front of their computers, but these guys sure as hell ain't geeks...

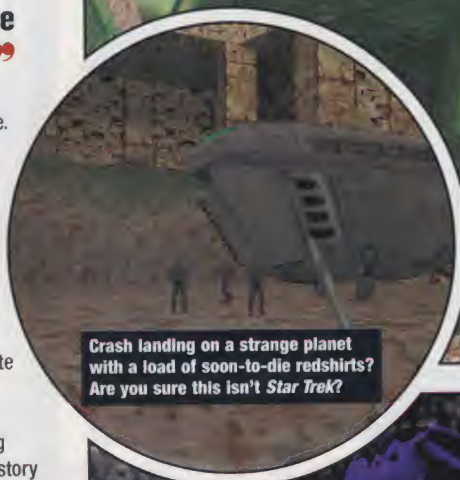


Scaremongers are once again predicting the death of the PC as a games machine, prophesying the total dominance of the next generation consoles. But if there is one encouraging thing happening in this industry, one thing that guarantees not only its survival but also its importance, it's the return of the bedroom developer. Mods have been around since the original *Quake*, but it's only in the last couple of years that it has really taken over. The stars of the future are all cutting their teeth with the *Half-Life*, *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III* engines, learning the ropes through a lot of hard work but also, and most importantly, doing it for fun.

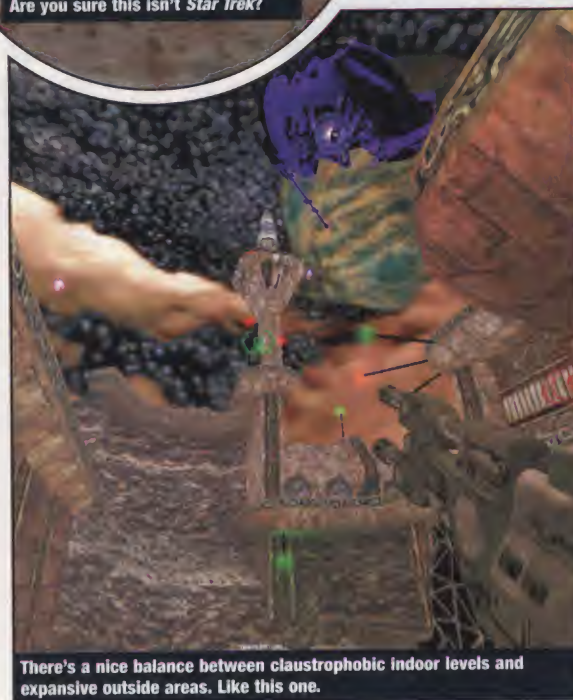
While *Gunman* developer Rewolf is made up of amateur programmers from around the world, the main man behind the project is Herb Flower, an 18 year-old German kid currently living the high-life in LA. At the time of writing, Flower is still in dispute with his parents and the German government, both of whom want him to leave the US and return to school (Germany has very tough laws on education). Who are they trying to kid? Making computer games is the new rock 'n' roll.



Giant space ships make an appearance almost any time you have sky over head.



Crash landing on a strange planet with a load of soon-to-die redshirts? Are you sure this isn't *Star Trek*?



There's a nice balance between claustrophobic indoor levels and expansive outside areas. Like this one.



Managing your ammo is as important as it was in *Half-Life*. Just don't overuse those alternate fire modes.

IN PERSPECTIVE

There is still no single-player game that can touch *Half-Life*, unless you're prepared to put in the extra time and effort into the slower, more complex approach of *Deus Ex*.

Half-Life

Deus Ex

H-L: Opposing Force

Gunman Chronicles

Voyager: Elite Force

Soldier Of Fortune

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P350
with 64 Mb RAM and a fast 3D Card

PCZ VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** It's like playing *Half-Life* again • It's sufficiently different and fresh to make it stand out on its own • Very satisfying weapons • Intense battles

↓ **DOWNERS** Comic book style stretches your belief • AI not quite up to *Half-Life* standards • Doesn't disguise its monorail nature as well as *Half-Life* did

87 The *Half-Life* legacy lives on



CREATIVE



SOUND



SOUND



SPEAKERS



SPEAKERS

***Watch out
behind you
and in front of you
and next to you
and under you
and&***

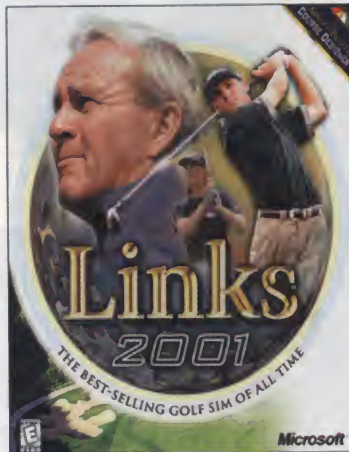
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LINKS 2001



MIDTOWN MADNESS 2



AGE OF EMPIRES II CONQUERORS
(EXPANSION PACK)



COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON





It's not all ocean – there are plenty of islands to fly over.



"Oooh, that's dangerous. Someone might get hurt."



The clouds and effects in *CFS2* are lovely.



No flight sim worth its salt is complete without a virtual cockpit. Which is why *CFS2* has got one.



The planes are beautifully detailed. Just look at that crappy peeling paint. Is it any wonder they lost the war?

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2

★ £29.99 • Microsoft • Out now

A new, revamped World War II sim from Microsoft, with new planes and sunnier weather. "Coo," says **Dave Mathieson**

There have been quite a few World War II flight sims released recently, and bloody good job too. After years and years of jets in Desert Storm-type scenarios, getting the chance to fly some of the coolest planes in history in massive dogfights over the battlefields of Europe makes a refreshing change.

The first of the current crop of WWII sims was Microsoft's *Combat Flight Simulator*, which was based around their renowned civilian flight sims, but with guns.

"There's no more cruising around picking off baddies at your leisure – you have to keep your eyes peeled and really fight for all you're worth to get a kill"

Although it had plenty to recommend it, *CFS* wasn't quite as good as some of the other titles that came out shortly afterwards – the planes didn't look quite right, the campaigns

were limited and the AI was a bit suspect, making the downing of opponents a bit peasy.

FLYING START

CFS2 has been completely reworked, with improvements in all the above, plus a whole new theatre – the Pacific. As

you'd expect from a war zone named after a big ocean, this means lots of sea and ships (including aircraft carriers – hurrah!), and you get to play as either the Americans or Japanese.

IN PERSPECTIVE

CFS2 is a big improvement over the first game. *WWII Fighters* comes close in graphics, while *EAW* has better campaigns but dated visuals.

Combat Flight Simulator 2

European Air War

Jane's WWII Fighters

The user interface is excellent, and has been done in a kind of '40s comic book style, which is a refreshing change from the usual 3D animation. The game itself is well structured with the usual mix of training, quick combat and campaigns covering most of WWII in the Pacific. The planes cover the same period, from Wildcats and early Zeroes through to the Corsair and George, as well as plenty of bombers, torpedo bombers and other cannon fodder that you can't fly. The campaigns are nicely thought out, and not as linear as those in the first *CFS*. They're definitely not the all-encompassing dynamic resource management-fests that you get

in *Mig Alley* and *Falcon 4*, but they're engrossing and give you the feeling of being there.

The in-game graphics in *CFS2* are fantastic. The planes themselves look incredibly realistic and definitely 'second hand', with patchy paintwork, and charring round the guns. Unlike the first *CFS*, the 3D models themselves are spot-on, and rendered using enough polygons to really smooth things out. The scenery is excellent, too, and although a lot of time is spent flying over vast expanses of ocean the excellent quality of the graphics gives a great impression of being stuck in the cockpit of a crappy little plane in the middle of an ocean miles from the nearest toilet. The weather/time of day effects are equally incredible.

FIGHTING TALK

Combat has been well spruced up, and both your wingmen and the enemy planes are pretty smart. This means there's no cruising around picking off baddies at your leisure – you have to keep your eyes peeled and really fight for all you're worth to get a kill (or cheat by

turning down the difficulty level). Combat damage is also well-modelled, and there's plenty of fun to be had making carrier landings in knackered planes.

Basically, Microsoft has come up with corker. It has some of the best graphics of any WWII sim, great gameplay, a new scenario, and the promise of add-on aircraft as well as the great scenery that comes with all their flight sims. I'd go and get it now if I were you. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor

266MHz CPU **Memory** 32Mb RAM

ALSO REQUIRES Windows 95, 98 or 2000 **WE SAY** No way José. Up to 64Mb RAM and a P450

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Excellent user interface • Engrossing campaigns • Great graphics

DOWNERS Needs tons of hard-disk space

87 The new benchmark for WWII combat sims

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000

PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE

★ £34.99 • EA • Out November

We often drive *Martin Korda* to distraction. So we thought he'd be the ideal choice to review this racing game

It really is hard to understand how F1 manages to attract so many people to its races. You sit in a crowd, often get soaked because it's pissing down with rain, and watch as 20 blurred, vaguely car-like objects whiz by you every couple of minutes. Nope, you've got me, I really don't get it and no amount of harping on about how "it's the crowd atmosphere that makes it so exciting", is going to convince me otherwise. Been there, saw very little, got bored and couldn't be arsed to fork out for the T-shirt because I realised that the only true adrenaline rush in F1 racing

a series of corners and straights by an expert, then it's your turn to have a go. Come off the track or take too long and you fail. However, rather than degenerating into a snore-fest tutorial, it becomes great fun trying to accomplish each challenge.

Before I started gibbering on about how great the driving tests are, I mentioned this thing called fun, and *F1CS2000* has plenty of it. Instead of trying to recreate every detail of F1, right down to the correct amount of stones that line each gravel trap, the boys at EA have decided to mix arcade action and realism to

“The boys at EA have mixed arcade action and realism to create a game that is both entertaining and extremely challenging”

is in the cockpit. And as most of us aren't even good enough to pass our driving test the first time round, the only hope we have of ever getting close to the action is through computer games. We'd all hoped *GP3* would be the game to recreate this thrill, but we were wrong. However, the good news is that where it failed, *F1CS2000* has (to a certain extent) succeeded.

FUN AND GAMES

Now before you start getting all overexcited, we have to tell you that *F1CS2000* is not, unfortunately, the definitive F1 game we've all been hankering after. However, it is loads of fun and has most of the features *GP3*, inexplicably, left out. Take, for example, the driving tests. Instead of providing you with a manual the size of a phone

directory in which a few basic 2D drawings show you how to drive, *F1CS2000* adopts a *Gran Turismo*-like approach. You watch and listen as you're driven through

create a game which is not only entertaining, but also extremely challenging. The AI isn't up to *GP3*'s standards, but in some ways this is no bad thing. You won't find yourself tempted to smash your monitor with a hammer just because you've skidded once and can't catch up with the pack. *F1CS2000* is so well balanced that if you're rubbish you can still compete with the back markers, while if you're a budding Schumacher the front-runners will provide you with a real fight. You can configure the game to your liking, making it as arcadey (turn on invulnerability and spin correction, play with the behind-car viewpoint and start ramming your way into first place) or as realistically (turn off all driving aids and turn on all mechanical failure and strategy options) as you like.

AND THERE'S MORE

Pit communications keep you updated on your race position and lap times, and the engines actually resemble the grunt of real-life F1 cars, rather than the usual pre-pubescent mosquito engine sounds of so many other

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you're after realistic physics and car setups, and don't mind two-year-old teams and drivers, then go for *GP3*. If you prefer fun and excitement, look no further than this. Eidos' *F1 World Grand Prix* is a pretty good bet as well.

F1 Championship Season 2000

GP3

F1 World Grand Prix

GP games. Although there are no Internet options, you can compete with up to seven other players over a LAN. All the season 2000 drivers, race scenarios and cars are also available and you can choose to set up your car yourself or load a default setting.

Although it has several annoying faults, such as providing a procession lap but only letting you watch it, an unclear external view interface and a strange floating vehicle effect, as well as some slightly shoddy graphics which still require a hefty PC, this is currently the most accessible, thrilling, and downright entertaining F1 game you can get your hands on. Don't expect miracles, but do expect to capture that thrill of racing which *GP3* sadly lacked. [M]

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 450
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
3D card **WE SAY** It's only worth picking up a copy of this game if you've got at least a PII 450 with 128Mb of RAM and a 12Mb graphics card. That really is the minimum, though.

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Balanced fun • Excellent tutorials • Current cars and drivers •
DOWNERS Need a hefty PC • Vehicles seem to float

82 Formula fun

Verstappen ahead and Salo behind. I think I need some more practice.

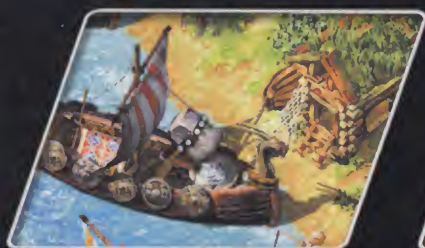
Blatant commercialism.

Now remember John, those markers *aren't* speed indicators OK?

All the season 2000 cars and drivers are available, including Jaguar.



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the Bugs!



PC CD-ROM

MICRO PROSE

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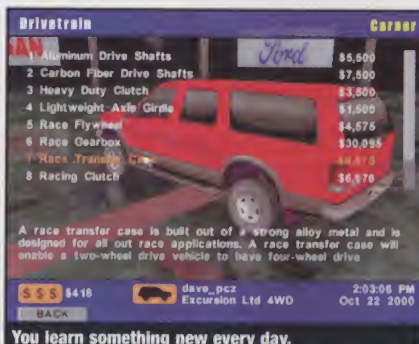
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PLACE 03/04



Night racing. You can even turn your headlights off, but we wouldn't recommend it.



Take shortcuts if you want, but you've still got to go through the obligatory checkpoints.



You learn something new every day.

4X4 EVOLUTION

£29.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out Now

Another off-road, online racing game? Surely there's been a mistake? **Dave Woods** is elated at a sudden sense of déjà vu

You wait years for a decent online racing game to come along, and then two turn up in the same month.

However, where *Insane* has been designed as an all-out arcade driver, *4x4 Evolution* is a curious mix of arcade and simulation.

"If you want to take on fat Americans and their custom trucks online, you'll need to win cash and get down and dirty under the bonnet"

There's no denying the fact that you can fire the game up and win races straight away. But if you want to get anywhere in Career mode, or take on the fat Americans and their custom trucks online, you'll need to win cash, upgrade, install new parts and generally get down and dirty under the bonnet.

Thankfully, there is a pay-off because like *Insane*, *4x4* plays superbly over a standard 56K

modem. Vehicles occasionally tangle and shift positions in impossible ways, but overall you can't have any complaints about the way the game handles online multiplayer action. And it gets better. Although this is a moot point, you can play online with Mac and Dreamcast users as

well. At the time of this review the console version hadn't been released and so I didn't get the pleasure of beating console kids at their own game, but I did have the satisfaction of beating the solitary Mac user that I found.

Getting online and finding an opponent is also extremely easy thanks to a built-in GameSpy browser, and although there weren't actually that many off-roaders online over the course

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you're looking for throwaway and hysterical online racing, *Insane* or *Midtown Madness* are both excellent. *4x4* treads a worrying path between simulation and arcade, but it's still not too shabby.

4x4 Evolution

Midtown Madness 2

Insane

of the week I spent reviewing this game, it's bound to pick up after the full release.

IT'S A DRAG

But the real gripe I've got with the game counts in both online and offline mode. The simulation aspect and the accuracy of the physics model actually detract from the racing. Most of the vehicles you get to control are a pain to manoeuvre and the early inexpensive vehicles feel extremely sluggish. Go online and the winner of the race is going to

be the person who's spent the most on his custom truck. Newbies are going to find it really hard to get anywhere at first.

There are other problems as well. Races consist of a number of different checkpoints – you have to go through all of these in order – and hundreds of immovable objects. Hit one of these and, by the time you've reversed and moved around, you're as good as out of the race.

Also, the big selling point that you can race anywhere only actually works if you know the tracks off by heart. Although you can leave the track and off-road at any point, there are only a couple of points in each race where it's actually beneficial to do it. This also leads to scenarios where dumb Americans actually think it's funny to challenge you to an online race before careering off the track never to be seen again.

There's also no real sense of speed and oddity, for a game as rugged as *4x4*, the racing experience looks, plays and sounds particularly muted. Rather like Old Trafford on a Saturday afternoon, the game lacks the one

important ingredient, atmosphere. A wheel helps to pull you in, but unresponsive vehicles and the simulation aspect hinder the performance of an otherwise competent drive.

Compare it to *Insane*, with its weight of different game types, the hysterical way your car takes physical damage and then falls apart, and *4x4* is left looking too po-faced for its own good. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
32Mb 3D Card and 56K modem, of course

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Excellent online mode • Cross-platform gaming • Inventive tracks • Massively customisable
DOWNERS Too serious • Lack of game types • The off-roading isn't exploited

67 Great fun, but a trifle muted



Trains, planes and other automobiles make up the moving obstacles.

INSANE

★ £34.99 • Codemasters • Out now

Insane: "Used by, or appropriated to, insane persons; as in insane hospital." Best get Dave Woods

Insane is the second of two online racing games that we've reviewed this month, and, although there is a single-player game in here, the most fun you're going to get is playing against other people. And believe me, *Insane* is a lot of fun. Unlike *4x4 Evolution* and a bit like Robbie Williams, *Insane* has been designed to entertain – pure and simple. Forget simulation, and forget about tinkering with your axles and what-nots, *Insane* lets you choose a vehicle – from a massive range of trucks, buggies, lorries and even hover-mowers – select a game type and let rip straight from the box.

RICHIE IS RUBBISH

But it's not an empty experience, far from it. Within five minutes of playing it on our LAN, the whole office was in hysterics. The first game we played was a simple checkpoint race. Then we moved on to a variation, where you have to claim points by being the first through a checkpoint. The sight

of Richie trying desperately to get his articulated lorry up a steep hill while I breezed past in a buggy was truly a great gaming moment.

Then we played a destruction zone game, where you have to park your vehicles on a cross while the rest try and smash you off. Every second you stay on the cross gives you points, and you can also score by high-impact smashing. As the vehicles take physical and visual damage, you

"Unlike *4x4 Evolution* and a bit like Robbie Williams, *Insane* has been designed to entertain – pure and simple"

get the beautiful sight of cars crushed to about half the size they started at. Again, it was Richie who caused the biggest riot by losing both wheels on one side of his car and driving around in circles before toppling off a

steep hill and smashing away out of sight. And when you get bored of this, you can try catching the flag, returning it and more.

WATCH IT

The challenge comes in the handling of the different vehicles and the fact that you can really feel the terrain you're driving over. Some vehicles roll easily and you can be in sight of the checkpoint when you get the inevitable

sinking feeling that you're going to go over. If you do, or if your car gets so trashed you have to hit the repair key, you lose valuable time and the chance for the checkpoint.

That's *Insane* in a nutshell. It's hilarious and, for sheer

Feeling violent, try this Japanese monster truck.

pleasure there's no other racing game like it. The only thing that we can't be sure of is its online performance. Since the game hasn't been released at the time of this review, there's no one to play online. To get round this, Codemasters set up a night when we could log-on and play against testers from Codemasters. Fine in principle, but when I tried to find a game, there was only one other person in there. And although I enjoyed giving him a round thrashing at a few simple checkpoint races, one-on-one isn't exactly the best way to prove how the game's going to cope with eight drivers at once. From what I've seen, it's going to cope fine but, unlike *4x4 Evolution*, I haven't

IN PERSPECTIVE

Good wholesome fun – that's what *Insane* is. And if you want more of the same try *Midtown Madness 2*, or *4x4 Evolution* for a more sedate experience.

Midtown Madness 2

Insane

4x4 Evolution

actually seen it with my own eyes yet. Still, it's a minor niggle and one that will probably prove redundant when the game is released. Longevity is the only other sticking point. It is a fairly shallow game, but with the online side helping things along there's still plenty to admire. **[X]**

TECH SPECS

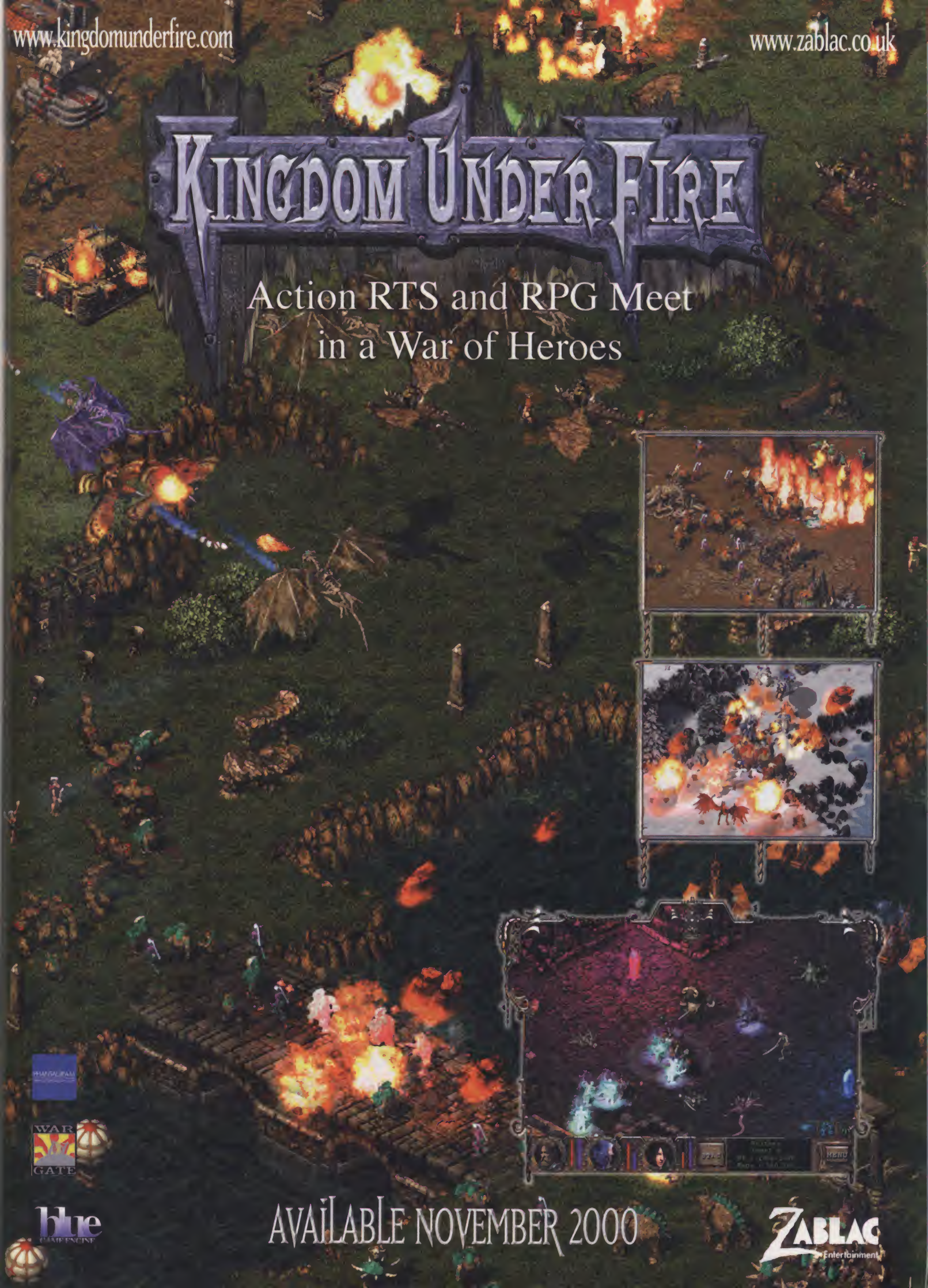
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 233
Memory 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** PIII 500,
128Mb RAM and a 56K modem

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Hilarious • Extremely playable • Loads of different games • Seamless online play
DOWNERS Didn't get a chance to stretch the online side

78 Shallow, but still great fun





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ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

★ £29.99 • Sierra • Out now

Andrew Wright flouts every planning law in existence to build an Ancient Greek city. Well, he is a god, after all...

So-called 'god games' might have started way back in the '80s with the classic, *Sim City*, but that certainly doesn't mean that the genre is past its sell-by date. Just look at the current chart success of *The Sims*, if you don't believe me.

Impressions has been up there for quite a while with historical management games such as *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* and now they've weighed in with a third title, *Zeus: Master Of Olympus*.

It's an intricate yet hugely playable micro-management-cum-building game that lets you simulate the start-up of a city in Ancient Greece, complete with random natural disasters and

visitations from the old Greek gods, villains and heroes thrown in to keep you on your toes.

Anyone familiar with the other Impressions titles will be right at home with *Zeus* but the game has a much broader appeal. The building and resource management side has been streamlined to remove many of the tedious micro-management elements. In *Zeus* you don't have to balance dozens of irritating statistics to maintain an efficient city – your citizens will do most of the work for you as long as you put up the right buildings.

Zeus is purely a single-player game based on a series of ten different adventures. These give you various goals to achieve and many are divided into anywhere from five to eight episodes. Three of the adventures are open with no set goals other than to become the most powerful city in the known world, either by conquest or

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

building colonies. The main disappointment is that there are no random maps, which reduces long-term playability. However, there are also eight basic and eight advanced tutorials, which could take you hours to wade through.

“In *Zeus* you don't have to balance irritating statistics to maintain an efficient city – your citizens will do most of the work”

First things first, though. Each building must be connected to a road so the first thing to do is build a road loop and add several huts. Soon the beautifully animated citizens will start to move in. They'll need water, so you add fountains and maintenance offices at regular intervals to keep them going.

Initially the people will feed themselves by foraging, but to advance you'll need to start farming. The type of food available depends on the adventure, but typically includes fish and wheat. Other options include carrot and onion farms as well as goat herding for cheese.

Farms have to be built on meadows that are relatively scarce, so some intelligent decision-making is required at the outset. Once the wheat is harvested, you'll need a granary in which to store it and possibly

It's quite fascinating watching them go about their business...

SHACKS A BUNCH

As soon as huts have a food supply, they automatically upgrade to shacks. Add some cultural diversions such as a philosophy college, podium and gymnasium and they'll upgrade to hovels or homesteads. To upgrade to tenements you have to provide them with fleece by herding sheep and to upgrade to apartments, you'll need to give them olive oil. Each housing upgrade holds many more people so there's no need to build houses all over the map – it's much more efficient to upgrade.

To get olive oil, you need to plant olive trees, build a grower's shed, a press and an oil vendor on the local agora. Aside from fish and cheese, food is produced on a yearly harvesting cycle, which means you need to harvest it quickly or lose it. At times, if you haven't put enough food away in storehouses, you can find your houses being downgraded so running a half-decent city



No urban existence is ever complete without its demons and psychopaths.



Build fortified villas for parasitic government officials and their tarts with public funds.





Who needs food when you could have coliseums and swimming pools?



A bridge with a little man is handy for keeping the suburban dregs out.

certainly keeps you moving.

Other aspects of city development include building a palace so you can raise soldiers and taxes, and building infirmaries to prevent plague. You've also got to add parks and amenities to improve the appeal of housing areas, otherwise some will refuse to upgrade.

Next comes the elite housing, from which you'll get your warrior class – hoplites and horsemen. These need to be built in high-appeal areas and then require wine, armour and horses. You can mine bronze to make armour, mine marble to make statues and temples, and silver to make money, but in many adventures you won't have access to everything. You'll need to trade – or take – what you need. To build up cash reserves, you convert basic resources like copper and marble into finished goods such as armour and statues for export.

In Zeus you can conquer other cities or start colonies to produce what you're short of. That said, there are no truly open play

scenarios in which you can do what you like. There are restrictions in every adventure. This does at least lead to variety, but it can be frustrating.

The gods play a big part in Zeus, as you'd probably expect, and you need to align yourself with whichever ones will benefit you most. That said, each god you align with – by building a temple – will also have its enemies and they'll try to damage your cities by sending monsters such as the Cerberus or Cyclops. To combat them, you need to attract heroes, again by building the appropriate objects but also by achieving certain population or resource goals. In some adventures you can build a stadium and even host your own Olympic games with rich rewards for winning medals.

Combat, it has to be said, is a bit of kludge. You attack or defend with either a rabble (unarmoured soldiers), hoplites or horsemen – or a combination – but tactics don't seem to come into it. The side with the most troops will batter the other one into submission eventually. You can defend your cities with walls and fortifications, but you can't build siege engines.

Interaction with other AI-controlled cities is well developed and offers plenty of options. Other cities can be allies, rivals or vassals paying you tribute. You can raid rivals for plunder or try to conquer them completely and turn them into vassals. You can also trade, send

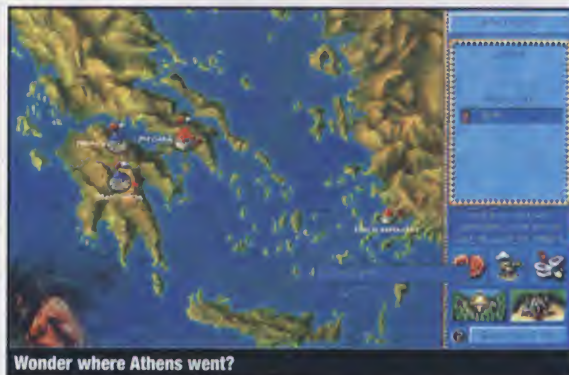


An advanced city complete with townhouses, mod cons and overcrowding.

gifts, request military or resource help and generally wheel and deal as much as you like.

Graphically, the game is excellent, with wonderful animations and a pleasant if two-dimensional terrain. You can play in 800 x 600 or 1,024 x 768 resolutions and switch dynamically between the two. The game is also very stable and multitasks without problems.

For my money, completely open play on randomly generated maps would have been much more attractive than the structured adventure approach, but Zeus is still undoubtedly the finest building-cum-management sim on the market with hours and hours of intense play on offer. Addictive, yes, good to look at, yes, but a classic? Not quite. **[C]**



Wonder where Athens went?



A typical Greek courtyard or Barbara Windsor's garden?



The death of Greek civilisation: exchanging philosophy for kebabs.

IN PERSPECTIVE

A big leap forward, but not quite as good as it looks.

Theocracy

Caesar III/Pharaoh

Zeus

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166
Memory 32Mb RAM 2Mb graphics card
WE SAY P233 with 4Mb graphics card is manageable at 800 x 600

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Excellent animation • Tons of new features • Incredibly addictive • Neat tutorials
DOWNERS No random maps • No multiplayer • Crap combat system

85 Amazingly addictive



The Red Rooms where your stable of whores do their business.



The first time you see a woman being 'back-scuttled' by an android is a memorable gaming moment, albeit for all the wrong reasons.



That seems to have done the trick.



A bit of simplistic space combat fails to liven things up.



Show us your bum for ten pence.

WET ATTACK — THE EMPIRE COMES BACK

★ £19.99 • CDV • Out now

After his recent *EverQuest* assignments, **Steve Hill** thought he could stoop no lower. He was wrong, of course...

Oh dear. If ever there was a game that didn't warrant a sequel, it was surely *Lula – The Sexy Empire*. For those fortunate enough to miss it, *Lula's* inaugural outing can loosely be described as a comedy sex adventure. More accurately, it can be described as a low point of PC gaming and something that should never have been released outside of its native Germany. But with *Wet Attack*, *Lula*, in no uncertain terms, is back, continuing the onslaught of smut in similarly non-hilarious fashion.

There is a storyline to the game, and suffice to say it involves travelling to a far-off galaxy to do battle with something or someone called the Pimperator, who has possibly been stealing the libido of *Lula* and her equally well-endowed friends. You assume the role of dim-witted taxi driver Buck, who receives

Lula's plea for help in a pseudo Princess Leia style, thus lamely justifying the game's subtitle (and quite possibly violating George Lucas' intellectual property).

PIMP

From there on, it's a laugh-a-decade romp to a series of suggestively named planets, offering numerous opportunities for regular sexual intercourse, with the odyssey largely funded by prostitution. A mix of gaming styles are on offer with the box boldly claiming to offer adventure, 3D shooter, real-time strategy and business simulation. This isn't a complete fabrication, although what it fails to mention is that they are possibly the worst example of the respective genres ever seen. The adventure section is desperately old skool and could easily be from a five-year-old game. An almost wholly linear affair, it simply involves

wandering around using a rudimentary inventory: essentially a laboured device for instigating low-grade cut-scenes. As for the supposed 3D-shooter section, it's actually more of a space combat

correctly leads to FMV footage of animated rutting. Foreplay consists of clicking on various body parts with an icon of either a mouth, a tongue, a hand, or something that looks like a thorn.

“With *Wet Attack*, *Lula*, in no uncertain terms, is back, continuing the onslaught of smut in similarly non-hilarious fashion”

interlude and is as pointless as it is primitive. The business simulation presumably refers to setting the price of the whores who service the population of each planet you land on, as well as the cost effectiveness of decking out your mobile brothel with the relevant accoutrements. And as for the real-time strategy claim, this is something of a mystery, so much so that the relevant screenshot is missing from the back of the box.

HO

Either way, all of the above is simply an excuse to regularly simulate foreplay with cartoon women, which if performed

Either way, it's an absurd experience, with the women reacting favourably to certain stimuli with appreciative noises and symbolic graphics. Performance-related points are awarded, and if 100 is reached

within five minutes, the softcore cut-scene kicks in. Bear in mind that this all takes place in stylised cartoon fashion, so unless you get excited watching Manga films, forget about this as a source of stimulation. In fact it's hard to see who *Wet Attack* is going to appeal to. The game is almost entirely without worth, and if you're after a bit of excitement you can get a year's subscription to any of the top-shelf mags for the same price. **W**



TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P333,
64Mb RAM

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS Great big knockers
- Appreciative moaning
- DOWNERS Dismal gameplay
- Ropey graphics

20 Not worth a toss

IN PERSPECTIVE

There aren't many games that can be compared to this, a fact we can all be grateful for.

Wet Attack
Lula – The Sexy Empire
Panty Raider

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GIFT

★ £29.99 • Cryo • Out December

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII Memory 64Mb RAM
REQUIRES 3D Card **WE SAY** No problems

Two classic gaming rules of relevance to take note of here: all French games are weird; and cute platform games on the PC are never more than slightly above average. Well, *Gift* sticks to the first one without a shadow of a doubt. From the bizarre enemies (a T-shirt-wearing dog with a giant black eye for a head?), to your main task of collecting seven dwarves for a beautiful princess, it positively reeks of garlic and armpit hair.

As for the second rule, yes, it complies with that too, rather too closely it must be said. Though in a flurry of ingenuity, the developers have come up with some original puzzles that make use of light and shadows – certain enemies can only be killed by shrouding them in darkness, for instance – paced thoughtfully throughout and they sit well among the *de rigueur* floating platforms and pick-ups. The camera does its job adequately and it

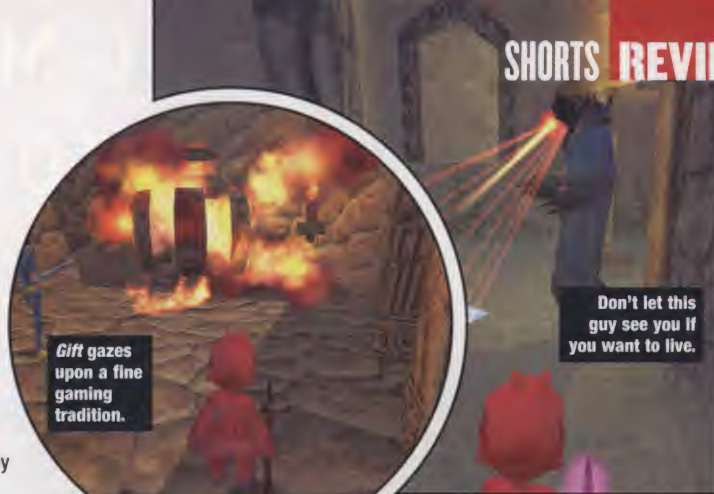
controls fine enough. However, the attack move is absolutely atrocious with your weapon feeling ineffectively clumsy most of the time.

So it plays competently enough and it does bring something slightly fresh to the genre, but still, even though it's technically sound, like every single PC game of this kind before it, it just isn't on a par with the console specific pleasures of *Mario 64* and its esteemed counterparts. Besides, the main character just isn't endearing enough to enjoy his company completely, and it doesn't have the same kind of freedom or enduring wonder of exploration as the aforementioned. And as for the so-called parodies, spoken about in the press release like they could sell the game on their own, they're about as funny as a DIY abortion. But that's probably more to do with it being French than anything else.

James Lyon

PCZ VERDICT

70%



Don't let this guy see you if you want to live.



SANITY: AIKEN'S ARTEFACT

★ £29.99 • Fox Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300 Memory 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII 450 and 128Mb RAM

If I was asked to describe *Sanity* in four words, I would simply say poor futuristic *Diablo* clone. This might sound a bit harsh, but truth is a bitter mistress – and if you want proof, you don't have to look much past the health and 'sanity' pools (red and blue don't you know?), or the style of combat – click, and click again.

The story revolves around Cain, your



Testing your firing skills on giant speakers is OK, but criminals would make better targets.



Tough cop Cain tackles street crime.

typical quasi-futuristic cop. Once you start the game properly, after a semi-tutorial teaching you to fire your gun (pressing the left button) and to fire your fireball (press 1 and then left click), you get to the real 'action'. Unfortunately, the rest of the game is just as simplistic as this.

Click on someone with a red circle underneath him or her to shoot at them, otherwise talk to them. The puzzles are laughable, simple and clichéd, involving talking to someone, then talking to someone else in a long line of tedium, and the 3D graphics, although pleasant are pretty basic.

The game does improve when you get some meaty spells, but it's only worth buying if you're a *Diablo* fiend and you've finished it, its sequel and all the better clones that money can buy, such as *Nox*.

David West

PCZ VERDICT

55%



EQUESTRIAD 2001

★ £19.99 • Midas • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PII 350, 64Mb RAM

What-ho, it's a horse riding game, jolly good. Actually, I'm lying because *Equestriad 2001* is neither jolly, nor is it particularly good. Despite Dave's initial worrying burst of enthusiasm – he put in extra practice while I was out of the office, just so he could beat me – we eventually came to the conclusion that unless you're obsessed by horses, under the age of ten, and particularly undemanding when it comes to software, you're going to end up feeling deflated by the whole experience.

There are three events for you to try out. One: Dressage – this is best described as dot-to-dot on a horse. Follow the markers on the ground and adjust your speed when prompted. Two: Cross Country – follow the arrows, steer your horse towards the jumps at the correct speed and press the action button just before the obstacle, when the marker flashes. And three: Show Jumping – see number two, but in a confined space.

As a novelty it's fun for a while (we all played a three-day event), but it's hard to imagine anyone getting that much out of it. Horsey types are better off in the saddle. If you can't afford one, get a My Little Pony and jump it manually over a box of cornflakes instead.

Martin Korda

PCZ VERDICT

39%

TO KNOW THE MIND OF A KILLER,
YOU HAVE TO GET INSIDE IT.

FEATURING THE
VOICE OF ICE T.



MONOLITH



DON'T GET MAD. GET EVEN.

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AIKEN'S
ARTIFACT™

NHL 2001

★ £29.99 • EA Sports • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb RAM

WE SAY 400MHz CPU with 64Mb of RAM, a good 3D card and a couple of gamepads



Ice hockey has always revelled in its bad-boy image, with a large majority of the audience only interested in watching opposing players engage in confrontation and inevitable combat. Body checks at combined speeds of over 20mph, 'accidental' hacks and blatant attempts to initiate mass brawls in full view of the hapless referee all provide an interesting and entertaining aside to the rather less enjoyable pursuit of guessing where the puck is.

It's probably for this reason that ice hockey games fare relatively well with the UK gaming public, especially compared to other sports largely defunct in this part of the world, such as American football or baseball. Consequently, EA Sports has always included scrapping in their numerous NHL titles, and they certainly aren't about to stop doing so now.

The gameplay in *NHL 2001* is extremely slick,

with players gliding over the ice with consummate ease. In fact, you can easily look very good without being very good at all, with players twisting, turning and accelerating at the touch of a few buttons. Scoring is still a rather random affair, with your shots-to-goals ratio dependent on both the skill levels of the player and the efficiency with which you power up your shot. In any case, the more shots you manage to hit, the more you're going to score.

So with all the latest stats, fast and furious hockey action, an excellent physics engine, lots of atmos and tear-ups galore, how can you go wrong? Well, it should be noted that if you already own *NHL 2001*, £30 is a lot to pay for a glorified update. If there are any gripes with how the game plays, it's that some people may find it a tad repetitive, and it's irritating that goals are due more to chance than your skill in front of the net. But whether you're a die-hard fan of the sport or not, you're likely to be impressed.

Carlos Ruiz

PCZVERDICT

80%



All players behave realistically, even resembling their real-life counterparts.



The atmosphere is created by all the official players, rosters and sponsors.



Two-player mode, either vs PC or person, is a far better game.

POP N' POP

★ £19.99 • Vektorlogic • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 Memory 16MB RAM

WE SAY No problems there – this is a low-res 2D puzzle game after all

Although starring the ageing Bub and Bob, *Pop N' Pop* is something of a departure from the likes of *Puzzle Bobble* and *Bust-A-Move*. Similar is the idea – line up three or more balloons of the same colour and they burst, ad infinitum until none remain. Different is the fact that the balloon shuffles across the screen in *Space Invaders* fashion rather than remaining static.

OK, so it's not much of a departure, neither is it a particularly interesting one.

Rather than having to judge the trajectory of your shot as we did in *Puzzle Bobble*, here success is more a case of timing as you move left or right to slip your coloured balloon into the right place. Pacier than *Puzzle Bobble*, *Pop* just doesn't require the same amount of skill. Thankfully, the bright characters and background, twee-plinky music and addictiveness are set at acceptable levels – and if a twist on the *Puzzle Bobble* theme is what you're after, *Pop* is probably the only route you can go.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZVERDICT

61%

MADDEN 2001

★ £34.99 • EA • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200MMX

Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** 3D card essential, as is a PII 350 and 64MB RAM

Wheeled out again for another season, John Madden, erstwhile American football commentator, again lends his name and voice to another EA Sports title, where the words foot and ball are about as well suited together as piss and chips.

As you would expect, EA has again done just enough to make the game worthwhile for gridiron fans. The graphics are better, all the teams, players – and this time coaches – are all in, and for anyone

wanting to play online, there is massive playability in this new version.

Unfortunately, with little else to choose from, *Madden 2001* suffers from a pretty poor physics engine and the ball often takes strange flightpaths. Added to that the game isn't very forgiving and, unless you already know the rules, you can expect a hard time – the manual is little more than a keyboard reference guide. Worst of all, Mr Madden's anecdotal interjections are getting less each year and his delivery ever more stilted.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZVERDICT

68%



This is rugby for overgrown poofs, according to our in-house expert.

RAINBOW SIX: COVERT OPERATIONS ESSENTIALS

★ £24.99 • UbiSoft • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 266MHz PII Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 500Mb hard drive space **WE SAY** PIII/128Mb

Never in the field of human conflict has one family of games given so many wannabe CTs as many clean head shots. *Rainbow Six*, and its sequel *Rogue Spear*, set a benchmark for single-player creep 'em-ups that has yet to be matched.

Covert Ops Essentials is a twin-bladed product: the Training Disc, a text-heavy multimedia frenzy, leads you through an in-depth Special Ops training program, examines you and then awards you. Admittedly, it was mildly interesting in a 'nothing on TV' kind of way, but then I liked *Rainbow Six* as an exciting game rather than a macho fantasy I wanted to live.

Of much greater interest was the *Mission Disc*. Diving straight into the campaign, the first mission in a Bolivian jungle proved a humdinger, especially on Elite level – easily one of the best R6 levels yet designed. Not so with the Arctic level, which I

completed on the first go. The next level, set in a missile silo, had a tortuous level design with lots of corridors and control rooms. A quick trigger finger and assault rifles all round provided the solution, though there's a choke point where snipers in the stairwells give you grief.

As I lit my intermission fag, I was looking forward to the next six levels ('nine all new levels featuring never before seen missions' the ads proclaim), when I realised the other six are small training levels in Hereford. I completed a couple in a few minutes, but then gave up in disgust. This is why the *Urban Ops* add-on pissed me off: too few missions – and there are even fewer in *Covert Ops*.

To Red Storm's credit, this doesn't require either R6 or RS to play; and if the *Training Disc* is your cup of tea, then maybe you'll be ecstatic. But I play R6 for gaming, and only die-hards who have to have it all should pay £25 for three proper missions.

Tim Ponting

PCZVERDICT

62%



Lots of camouflage gear, hi-tech equipment, but little excitement.



About as interesting as joining the territorial army, although less torturous than watching Vanessa, Ruby Wax or any other ugly TV gargoyles.

BREAKOUT

★ £19.99 • Hasbro • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200MMX Memory 32MB RAM **WE SAY** Who cares

After wasting a few pointless minutes playing the demo of *Breakout* last month, we could almost say the experience was an enjoyable one. But the full version of the game is worse. On the same exact system, we found the graphics to be jerkier, the sound non-existent and the gameplay dull.

Assuming for a moment that we never expected much anyway, we still came away disappointed. So far Hasbro has soiled the memory of many a fine game, from *Pong* to *Missile Command* and even the once mighty *Galaga*. For God's sake, if you want to play old games, download an emulator. And if you want some *Breakout* action, play *DX-Ball 2* instead by going to www.longbowdigitalarts.com.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZVERDICT

23%



Plenty of power-ups and sub-games, but they don't amount to much.



The two faces of Galaga. Old-skool decency...

And the brand new 3D mistake.

GALAGA DESTINATION EARTH

★ £19.99 • Hasbro • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Fine

Galaga isn't exactly the most famous classic that Hasbro has chosen to update, but it has got a very hardcore following that probably aren't going to be best pleased by what they find here. It all starts off innocently enough, with an old-school smattering of *Galaga*, but this is swiftly ruined by an excursion into the worst type of 3D space combat.

Think *Space Harrier* but worse and you're not

going to be far off. As we've said before, sometimes Hasbro gets these updates right. Often they get them so badly wrong, you wonder if the developers have got any sort of passion for the game they're converting. On this sort of evidence you'd be well advised to dust down your old BBC and play that version instead. At £5 a shot, we'd be more charitable, but this is strictly play-once, throw-away fodder.

Dave Woods

PCZVERDICT

19%



If you're a war enthusiast or some such saddy, this is just the game for you - dull and sterile.



Nothing new, nothing exciting. Ah well.

CLOSE COMBAT: OPERATION OVERLORD

★ £29.99 • Mattel Interactive • Out Now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 200 Memory 32Mb **WE SAY** You need up to 64Mb for a smooth experience

There's something about WWII that turns ordinary everyday folk into sad anal retentives, spouting off facts about Panzers, Shreks, Spitfires and other assorted paraphernalia. So when *Close Combat* arrived back in February 1996 it was like manna from heaven, albeit a slightly 'blood, toil, tears and sweat' heaven.

Though, sadly, nothing much has changed from that point on. The basic premise of this game is still exactly the same. Taking command of a squad of infantry, tanks and artillery, you have to keep your boys alive while taking various assorted targets.

The game is real-time and there's a campaign mode for all budding armchair generals out there, although it is a slightly confused affair, where you can restructure your army at a whim. It may be good for the kids, but it certainly removes the realism

aspect prevalent in earlier versions. If you were parachuted into a village, surrounded by Germans, you could hardly swap your recon troops for a Sherman Tank.

And the game really comes unstuck when you realise the graphics haven't changed at all from *Close Combat IV*. Which begs the question what have the developers been doing for the past 12 months? The engine is the same as the old version; there are a few new units and the game is set in Normandy rather than the Battle of the Bulge. But, other than that, this is little more than a giant add-on pack to a poor sequel.

When you consider how astounding *Sudden Strike* is and then look at this, you realise how poor it is. As the Russians discovered during the war, you either modernise or you die. Unless you really are an addict of the series, you better just give this a miss.

Daniel Emery

PCZ VERDICT 38%



BASS AVENGER

★ £19.99 • Simon & Schuster • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 Memory 16Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 170Mb hard drive space **WE SAY** If we caught a fish as ugly as this we'd lob it straight back in

We've studiously ignored *Deer Avenger* and its wretched sequel, despite the fact that they landed on our desks last month. We've had our share of rubbish recently, but these 'hilarious parodies' are too much. However, as they keep churning them out, we thought we'd better do our duty and warn you off.

The latest is *Bass Avenger* (but you can substitute *Bass* for *Deer*, or whatever) where you get to take revenge on idiot fishermen by tossing bras, porn mags and

other pervy paraphernalia into a lake and reeling the fishermen in who take the bait. It's less than rubbish.

So if the developers are listening, we'd like to give them a suggestion. The only other *Avenger* game we're interested in is the one where we take a sledgehammer to games that insult people's intelligence before turning on the developers and cracking a few skulls. Until this happens, we're not going to review any more of these games, so just ignore them in the shops if you see them.

Dave Woods

PCZ VERDICT 5%



WIZARDS & WARRIORS

★ £34.99 • Activision • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P2 233 Memory 64Mb **WE SAY** That will work

Take a look at the screenshots that accompany this review and ask yourself if you could spend hours in front of a game that looks as bad as this one. For many of you the answer will be no, but RPG die-hards will no doubt persevere and in doing so will discover a reasonably competent RPG with many nice touches but no distinguishing features of any note.

This is role-playing by numbers: form a

party of adventurers; raise their experience through fighting; embark on quests; and find the magic Mavin sword that seems to be what all the fuss is about. This is not an awful game by any means, but it's going to have a lot of trouble making friends in the RPG community with such dated presentation. A clumsy mouse-driven interface with no keyboard shortcuts doesn't help either. No Classic award for this then.

David Stark

PCZ VERDICT 48%





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Only one long-running, universally acclaimed, science fiction saga has had the gall to throw its name onto just about every genre of video game in existence. But until we get around to *Star Wars*, here's that other show...

★ MAKING IT SO Paul Presley

PCZ SUPERTEST STAR TREK

Ⓛ to R: Ensign Korda got tongue tied with *Klingon Academy*. ★ Lt Presley renounced his *Trek* affiliation when *Babylon 5* came along. ★ Captain Woods is a world renowned expert on warped engines (you should see his car). ★ Lt Cmdr Shoemaker can name every 'Kirk Snogs A Green Girl' episode by heart. ★ Cmdr Hill reviewed *Elite Force*, *Armada* and *BOTF* and could do with a holiday.

THE CONTENDERS

What is it about a fictional, make-believe universe of ray guns, kill-oh-zap robots and big spaceships that inspires the kind of loyalty in its fans that causes thousands of them to parade around in loose-fitting approximations of the costumes every other weekend at a conference hall in Birmingham, Chipping Sodbury or some other backwater of existence, debating the merits of one type of made-up technology over another, or how one fat, bald 'captain' (actor) is better/worse than another bald, fat 'captain' (actor)?

OK, a stereotyped image certainly. But you'll have to forgive us. In the past half a year, we've seen a new *Star Trek* game almost every other week. Basically, we're getting fed up with them and so we feel the need to vent a little steam. Besides, the games industry is seen as being populated by socially awkward loser males itself, so when we do find a target that's easier to pick on than ourselves, we can't help but kick downwards to help our self-esteem a little. It's the food chain, don't you know?

Anyway, on with the merciless critique of a genre. On offer today are five such examples of how wide the Paramount cash cow is being spread – a real-time strategy game, a turn-based strategy game, a space combat simulation, er, another turn-based strategy game (*Are you sure about all this?—Ed.*) and a first-person shooter. There are other games and other genres of course, but frankly we haven't the energy. ➔

ARMADA



STARFLEET COMMAND



KLINGON ACADEMY



BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION



ELITE FORCE



PHOTOGRAPHY Simon Clay
VENUE Star Trek Exhibition: The Science Museum



The Federation gets shafted by the Borg. Again.

ARMADA

Prezzer: Frankly, I thought it was appalling.
Richie: I wouldn't say that. It's just that they've taken a genre and tried to crowbar the *Star Trek* licence into it.
Dave: It doesn't sit well you mean?
Richie: *Star Trek* is about characters, storylines, diplomacy and whatever. This is just harvesting tiberian...
Dave: Dilithium.
Richie: Whatever. But it's just

mining and building lots of soldiers and so on. Everything we've seen before in other guises.
Prezzer: It seemed to me as though they'd seen *Homeworld* and thought, "Let's have a go at that". But because *Homeworld* had already done the slick 3D control system, they couldn't do the same because they'd be accused of ripping them off.
Martin: So they went for a worse 2D system.

Mark: The setting is completely ludicrous and the control system is so unbelievable that if it wasn't for the fact that the story is actually pretty good, I wouldn't have been able to play it for more than about ten minutes.

Richie: When is it set? After *Deep Space Nine* has finished?

Mark: The Dominion are in it, yeah.

Richie: It has a really good story, and the way you control each of the different sides is good. The trouble is that there are only about five missions per side. You're just getting into being the

Federation and suddenly you're having to control the Romulans.

Mark: It's an extremely simplistic RTS, which is probably why I did enjoy playing it. I don't usually play those sort of games at all – I don't enjoy them, I never know what I'm doing and I'm usually dead within five minutes.

Martin: I just thought it was so *Command & Conquer* in space. Build some units, explore the map, blow a few things up. Nothing new.

Mark: There are certain weapons and ships that you create later on that are quite nice. Special abilities such as time warp and so on.

Richie: They're just like arcade powerups, though. It's just standard genre stuff.

Prezzer: That's typified by all the classification of Borg ships. What's that all about for Christ's sake? Here you have one of the most alien of aliens, a random hive mind that builds whatever shape comes to mind, that exists by assimilating whatever it comes across. Yet here they're just a standard race in drab green colouring. What the hell do the Borg have to build mining stations for? The cube ship has this function and the diamond ship has that role? Sod off.

Dave: They haven't really bothered to explore the *Star Trek* licence beyond having a couple of the main characters do some voices. It's like Richie's saying – a standard, genre-typical RTS with *Star Trek* clothing on top.

Richie: I thought the graphics were nice, though. The ships looked good, the shield and cloaking effects, the nebulae in the background.

Dave: Nebulae.

Richie: Whatever.

Prezzer: The in-game FMV sequences were terrible.

Mark: Yeah, they were very poor.

Prezzer: Especially after the great opening sequence.

Richie: You

saw that and you wanted the rest of the game to look like that.

Prezzer: The graphics were OK, but the problem was you couldn't control the camera at all. You never had any clue where your ships were or what was going on. You're constantly getting lost and losing track of events.

Dave: There is a level of autonomy, though.

Prezzer: Yeah, but half the time I didn't feel like I was playing the game at all. It was playing itself. An enemy would be detected and before I could even move the mouse all my ships would



“Its strength is that it has managed to cordon off a whole society of obsessive geeks into their own little world”

PREZZER ON *STAR TREK*

Richie: How many episodes do you see in which they build a starbase in three seconds?

Mark: There is a tradition in certain episodes, especially *Deep Space Nine*, of great big interstellar battles, with loads of ships on each side.

Prezzer: Yeah, but they only started putting those in because the ratings were going down.

Richie: The thing is, when you look at the big battles in the show, none of them compare to something like *Star Wars*. That's not its strength. Its strength is in creating this whole universe, filled with phenomena to explore.
Prezzer: No, *Star Trek*'s strength is that it has managed to cordon off a whole society of obsessive geeks into their own little world, out of harm's way, while the rest of us can get on with our normal lives.

Mark: You're still not looking cool, Prezzer.

ARMADA
Sort of *C&C* meets *Homeworld* meets *Force Commander*. Four races (including a bizarrely ordinary version of the Borg) does exceptionally little to hold the appeal and, with a camera interface that makes Parkinson's sufferers seem rigid, there's not much here to please. Find your *Trek* thrills elsewhere.

SCORE	74% PCZ #90
DEVELOPER	Activision
PUBLISHER	Activision
PRICE	£34.99

Mark: I didn't understand this one.

Martin: Really? I liked it a lot.

Richie: Me, too.

Martin: At first I thought it was going to be really rubbish because I couldn't get the hang of it. But then I suddenly worked it all out and I really started to enjoy it. It's basically a little bit like *Klingon Academy*, but without loads of annoying buttons to press and you're outside the ship flying about the place and there's real-time combat. The guy who reviewed it couldn't explain it properly either.

Mark: It makes no sense whatsoever.

Richie: It looks like a real-time strategy game, but it's not. It's actually a space simulation. It's what *Starfleet Academy* should have been.

Martin: I've got it. It's like playing a space combat sim... in third-person mode.

Prezzer: On acid.

Richie: The thing they did wrong with *Starfleet Academy* was they made it feel like you were flying a goddamned fighter instead of a goddamned starship.

Dave: They tried that in the last film, didn't they? Flying the Enterprise with a joystick.

Richie: It's turn-based, but you can still see exactly what's going on all the time.

Prezzer: It's truer to the large-scale battles of the series than *Armada* was.

Martin: It's also real-time turn-based.

Mark: (collapses in laughter)

Dave: And it's a point and click and a simulation and...

Richie: It's based on the board game, though, so it's bound to be a bit different.

Mark: They had to come up with some very convoluted solutions to transfer it to the PC world, though.



Richie: About the only bad thing about it was the lack of a story. Oh, but I did like being able to play as the Gorn.

Dave: Were those the green lizard things?

Richie: From the episode 'Arena'.

Mark: You don't see them, though,



Starfleet Command made Mark's head hurt a lot. But then again, it doesn't take much.

STARFLEET COMMAND

do you? Are there any voices or actors from the series in the game?

Richie: They've got Sulu doing the voices, who is probably the last person you want doing them.

Prezzer: Hey, hey, hey. Don't knock Takei, man. He's the best. Sulu should get his own series.

Mark: He never kicked anyone, though. He should have been

commanding entire fleets. It does get very difficult, but it's never the same.

Dave: It's hard to learn, though. The interface is horrible.

Richie: It is pretty crap, but I did try playing it with that Microsoft Game Voice thing. I was sitting there with my headphones on and the microphone attached and had it all set up so I could just say "Full shields" and so on instead of pressing keys. I'd be shouting out commands like, "Raise shields" and my wife would be downstairs shouting, "What's that?" and I'd be like, "Nothing dear."

Mark: You've too much time on your hands.

Richie: "Make it so!", "Pardon, darling?" "I'll be down in a minute."

Prezzer: (reading from magazine) It does, however, have superb graphics and sound. And multiplayer mayhem, from what I hear.

Richie: The graphics do look quite bad these days, to be fair. They've dated quite badly.

Dave: Plus, it's still on a flat 2D

plane like *Armada* and all the other space strategy games. It hasn't moved on.

Martin: There's still a lot to do, though, that makes up for it. You can send out probes and use tractor beams and beam over troops to take over ships.

Mark: You can do that in *Armada*.

Richie: It's not quite the same thing in *Armada*.

Prezzer: You mean they don't go all wiggly?

Richie: I mean it's just an extra weapon in *Armada*. It's not like an entire subsection of the game.

Mark: I don't know, I just never really got much of a

Star Trek feeling from it.

Richie: If you played the board game you would.

Mark: I don't want to play the board game just to get the most out of it, though. I'm not some 60-year-old, bearded-weirdy American. I haven't got the time for that sort of thing.

Richie: Well, I think it captures the true playability of the board game and I can't wait for the sequel out next month.

Prezzer: Do people still play board games? Haven't we killed them all off yet?

Richie: Board games are fantastic. *Escape From Colditz* is the best thing ever made.

Dave: Naah. Mousetrap.

Mark: It makes my head hurt.

Martin: What Mousetrap?

Martin: No, *Starfleet Command*. It's just too weird to get into.

Richie: Well, it's a space combat simulation rather than a straight strategy game. For what it is I think it works really well.

Prezzer: It's just not particularly *Star Trek*. It could be any bunch of space ships slugging it out. Again, like *Armada* it's just a genre, albeit a confusing one, with a gratuitous licence draped on top.



STARFLEET COMMAND

Based on an ageing board game, this genre-defying (as far as Martin is concerned) strategy-cum-combat-cum-simulation, er, fest is still pretty engaging. It's certainly dated quite quickly from a graphical point of view, but it's still quite playable. The sequel is out soon. Watch out for our reviews.

SCORE	83% PCZ #81
DEVELOPER	Quicksilver
PUBLISHER	Virgin Interactive
PRICE	£34.99

“It's still on a flat 2D plane like *Armada* and all the other space strategy games. It hasn't moved on”

DAVE ON *STARFLEET COMMAND*

a martial artist.

Richie: His smile seems to be surgically implanted.

Dave: Anyway...

Richie: Yeah, sorry. Anyway, it's got no story, but it does have this thing called Dynaverse, or something. Randomly generated missions. You start off with a tiny little ship and end up

We've seen Ingmar Bergman dramas that move at a faster pace than *Klingon Academy*.

KLINGON ACADEMY

← **Prezzer:** Before we start, you reviewed this didn't you Martin?

Martin: Yup, I got back from holiday and found six disks on my desk and a message from Dave saying we'd need it by the end of the week.

Prezzer: Would that be why you misspelled Christopher Plummer's name, then?

Martin: Did I?

Prezzer: You called him Christopher Plumber, as in General Chang, son of Ka'Leth, from the house of Ka'tang, here to patch up your leaky bathroom pipes.

Martin: Ah.

All: (hysterical laughing)

Dave: (Klingon voice) Today is a good day to fix the U-bend.

Prezzer: Just wanted to clear

that up. Right, what do we make of the game?

Mark: It's extremely slow. Painfully slow, in fact.

Martin: It is.

Prezzer: I got bored sick of the Klingons within the first ten minutes. That interminable opening sequence that just wouldn't end. "I am K'This, son of K'That." JUST SHUT UP!

Richie: I thought the opening sequence was really good.

Martin: It's supposed to be like that because that's how Klingons are in the films.

Prezzer: Why do they have to constantly bang on about their parents and their parents' parents and honour and that? Let me ask you this, while we're on the subject. If Klingons are so damn honourable, why do they insist on using cloaking devices and sneaking up on the enemy? If they're so noble they should just come on up front and say right, "Who wants some?"

Mark: Anyway...

Prezzer: (fumes away)

Richie: I liked the storyline and the movies. Those parts worked really well. Without them it would have been really dry. I mean, I really hate Klingons and I hate people who dress up as them, but this was all just good fun.

Martin: Well, the reason the game seems so slow is that you have to type in so many numbers all the bloody time.

Prezzer: Christ, it felt like I was back at school.

Mark: When I first read about how the command system was going to work, I thought it would be like *SWAT 3*. Simple and intuitive.

Richie: It takes forever to get a command over. But I suppose the thinking is that if you say "Raise shields", someone else has to go and press the button to put the shields up in real life. If it was real, which it isn't. Come on *Star Trek* fans, I'll take you on.

Martin: Playing through the tutorial is enough to send you into a coma. "To move, press 1 then 6 then 9 then 3..."

Richie: I hate that kind of thing in tutorials, when it says, "Now press forwards," and you accidentally press backwards and it screams, "YOU FAILED!"

Mark: I didn't bother with the tutorial, I just went straight into the main game and it didn't seem to tell me what I was supposed to do. I was just floating in space wondering what to do.

Richie: What really pissed me off was that I was reading some reviews of the game in the States and over there it came with a 300-page manual. What do we get? A little pamphlet with the manual stored on the disk.

Prezzer: Terrible. What are we, second-class citizens? It's an outrage. We read more than the Americans do anyway.

Dave: It's a bit of a mish-mash. They had to slow things down after *Starfleet Academy* because people complained it felt like they were piloting fighters. But now it's so slow that when a ship goes past you can't see where

the hell it is. It takes you five minutes to turn around.

Prezzer: I rather liked *Starfleet Academy*. The storyline was nice, it flew along at a nice pace—

Mark: What, warp three?

Prezzer: It was varied. It wasn't all just go here, shoot them, go there, shoot some more. You had to talk, negotiate, rescue hostages, sort out disputes and so on. It felt like a good representation of the Federation world. That doesn't work for Klingons, though, as all they care about is fighting and drinking and talking about their parents.

Martin: They've tried to recreate *Starlancer*, but with bigger ships that move really slowly. The whole idea of games like that is that you have fast action.

Prezzer: Combat in *Star Trek* is essentially equivalent to submarine warfare. Which is great, except you don't do

Martin: Again, you could beam crew on board other ships if things weren't going to well in regular combat.

Prezzer: Is that 3, 1, 7, 1, 2, 4, 3?

Martin: No, I think it was 7, 1, 9, 3, 2, 8, 6.

Prezzer: I thought that was 'Go forward slightly'?

Mark: There are some nice ideas on offer, but the problem is that the engine is so slow paced you just can't be bothered spending a lot of time finding them all. I was watching Martin playing it once and all I could see was his ship shooting away at the enemy ship slightly in front of him. Ten minutes later I've been to get a drink and some crisps, I walk by and he's still shooting at the same thing. He'd got rid of some shields and that was about it.

Richie: Did you find that every time a ship found out where you were hiding they'd keep trying

"I really hate Klingons and I hate people who dress up as them, but this was all just good fun"

RICHIE ON *KLINGON ACADEMY*



submarine warfare in 3D first-person. You have to take the *Starfleet Command* route.

Richie: Even though it shouldn't have been first-person, there were a lot of features in space. Nebulas and stuff.

Dave: Nebulae.

Richie: Whatever. You could hide in gas clouds and cloak and so on. The slow pace added to the tension in some places. Plus the crew would gain experience.

to ram you?

Prezzer: I found that usually the quickest way to kill someone was to ram them for a bit until their shields were down then fire away. All a bit silly really.

Dave: It's just a bit of a missed opportunity overall. In theory it should have been a great game, but they just got it wrong somewhere along the line.

Mark: I just want to know what's next for the franchise. *Bajoran Academy*?

All: (silence)

KLINGON ACADEMY

The pasty-heads finally take the lead in this sequel to the superior *Starfleet Academy*. Part adventure, part space combat sim, this has everything the young Klingon could ask for. As well as numbers. Lots and lots of numbers. It's like every bad maths lesson you've ever endured rolled into one.

SCORE	69% PCZ #93
DEVELOPER	14 Degrees East
PUBLISHER	Interplay
PRICE	£34.99

Prezzer: It's a good game for the first couple of hours and then suddenly it just all falls apart. It's great for about a hundred turns or so and then it slows down to an interminable crawl.

Mark: It's true that when you reach a certain point the game gets silly and there's no point to it. There seems to be no way of winning, you just reach a stalemate with the other races.

Prezzer: Maybe it's not so much a game, but a lesson to us all about the pursuit of power. War is bad. No one can win.

Mark: But that doesn't exactly

sorts of cool stuff with them.

Prezzer: That's right. It's all really nice. But then it rapidly goes downhill.

Mark: I wouldn't say 'rapidly'. It is a big game. But it does eventually reach a point where there's just no point to it anymore.

Martin: The combat's bloody awful. Really boring.

Richie: It was quite a good idea putting 3D combat in there.

Mark: But it doesn't work.

Richie: It looks odd, that's for sure.

Mark: When you first get into a fight and you've got like two

“One thing I did like was the espionage part, where you can send people off to sabotage another world”

MARK ON BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

ships against two, you can manoeuvre and try tactics out. But when you've got 12 against six, you just can't control it and you have to go to automatic resolution most times. Which usually means you lose.

Dave: Maybe it was just bad luck on my part, but there did seem to be too many occasions where your entire fleet would just get wiped out and you'd be forced to start all over again.

Mark: You need to make better use of scouts and that.

Prezzer: Working out how far you could travel was confusing as well. All that red, green and yellow area nonsense.

Richie: That was a bit odd, yeah. Like when you start off and you've just got science ships and colony ships and you can't take them outside a certain perimeter.

Prezzer: Oh and it takes *sooo* long to build something. It takes about 40-odd turns just to build a cup or something at first.

Richie: Tea. Earl Grey. Hot.

Martin: When you take over a new colony and they've got about three people on the planet or something stupid, building anything takes years.

Mark: One thing I did like was the espionage part, where you can send people off to sabotage another world. It would get a bit unreal while you were off micro-managing the whole universe, but suddenly you'd get all these messages reminding you that actual things are happening on each world. Like you'd have sabotaged a station but successfully managed to blame it on someone else.

make for a good game.

Richie: That's how it gets towards the end, though. The only way you can progress is through war. The diplomacy is great to begin with, but it always gets to the point where everyone is fighting everyone, and if you're playing as the Federation it makes you feel as though you're doing it wrong.

Dave: You're probably not trying hard enough with the peaceful routes.

Richie: The annoying thing is that the style of this game is what *Star Trek* is all about. *Birth Of The Federation* should have been absolutely amazing. It fits perfectly into the licence. Is it by the same guys who did *Masters Of Orion*?

Dave: It is pretty similar. But *Masters Of Orion* is a great game.

Prezzer: It's true that this lends itself to the *Star Trek* licence better than some of the other games, though.

Richie: One little thing that annoyed me was that it was the Next Generation era. If this was supposed to be the birth of the Federation then it should have started off with Zephrym Cochrane and all that rubbish.

Mark: It's all to do with licences. MicroProse can only do Next-Gen games. Interplay has Kirk and co.

Prezzer: It was a great game... early on. When the universe is all new and exciting and you keep encountering new races and showering them with gifts as you ask them to join your happy band.

Mark: Getting the Vulcans on your side is one of the best moments because you get all



Birth Of The Federation is good for about 100 turns only. And the battles are crap.

BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

Prezzer: I kept wanting to have much more control over the spies, though. I wanted to give them very specific orders and come up with sneaky schemes of my own rather than leaving it up to blind chance.

Dave: You mentioned the micro-managing there. When you've got about ten or 11 colonies, trying to control each one, every turn is a logistical nightmare. There's supposed to be an automated function in there, but it never does what you want it to.

Martin: Plus the routine for building up each colony is identical. You do exactly the same thing each time. No variation. It gets really repetitive. I suppose that's true of most strategy games, but that doesn't excuse it.

Richie: That's basically the whole game. It's a chore. It starts off a chore, it ends up a chore, but in the middle you have quite a lot of fun. It's like sex.

Prezzer: After three...

All: YOU'RE NOT DOING IT RIGHT!

Mark: In its favour it does stand alone as a turn-based game in a time when everything is real-time.

Martin: Except *Starfleet Command* which is a real-time turn-based space strategy combat sim.

Richie: What you need is *Civilisation 2* with a *Star Trek* bent. That's what this should have been really. The guys that made *Imperium Galactica* should do *Birth Of The Federation 2*. It would be superb.

Prezzer: For this one then, we don't recommend you play it for more than a few hours at a time.

Mark: I'd say you can get about six hours out of it before it all goes pear-shaped.

Martin: *Birth's* real strength is as a database of *Trek* aliens. Every time you encounter a new race you're like, "Ooh it's them!"

Mark: There are a lot of minor races that crop up and you never get the same ones in each game and they're all from different

episodes of the series.

Prezzer: Do you consider yourself a Trekkie or a Trekker, Mark?

Mark: Er... I consider myself an individual.



BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

The oldest of the bunch, *Birth Of The Federation* is one of those deceptive games that is great fun for the first few hours, but which rapidly take a turn for the worse thereafter. There's still a lot on offer here, though, and it is probably the most faithful use of the license to date.

SCORE	89% PCZ #78
DEVELOPER	MicroProse
PUBLISHER	MicroProse
PRICE	£34.99



The best FPS after *Half-Life*? *Gunman Chronicles* might have something to say about that.

ELITE FORCE

← **Richie:** Since it's just a first-person shooter, they could so easily have gone the way of *Klingon Honour Guard*. Instead they decided to put all sorts of characters in there, characters that were shit – but half the characters on *Voyager* are shit so that kind of works well. Luckily, there are characters that you like as well. **Prezzer:** Not that arse that keeps laughing all the time. I wanted to castrate him and boil his dog after ten minutes. **Martin:** I got an interesting piece of feedback from a reader today. He said he was playing it as a male character and got chatted

up by one of the female sidekicks. Then he went back and played it as a female and got chatted up by her again.

Dave: Excellent. Girl-on-girl action.

Mark: Actually, the lead girl is quite good looking for a computer game character.

Richie: She is quite saucy, isn't she?

Martin: And *Seven Of Nine* is in it, which is a bonus if ever I've seen one.

Prezzer: Control yourself gentlemen, please. I am fed up of all these people claiming it's better than *Half-Life*.

It's not even close to that level of brilliance.

Richie: No, it's nowhere near as good as *Half-Life*. But it does depend on what you compare it to. It's the best *Star Trek* game, easily. Compared to other first-person shooters, though it's probably the second best after *Half-Life*.

Prezzer: No. *Deus Ex* is better, surely.

Mark: I don't know if you'd actually call *Deus Ex* a first-person shooter. It's a role-playing game, surely?

Prezzer: You run around in first-person, don't you? You shoot people,

don't you? Ergo a first-person shooter. The RPG bits are just added extras.

Richie: I wouldn't put them up against each other.

Martin: That's an argument for another time. What swung *Elite Force* for me was the same thing that worked so well in *Aliens Vs Predator*. The recognisable enemies. I got the same scary feeling going up against the Aliens as I did going up against the Borg. Especially when you don't have the I-Mod.

Prezzer: I think they made a mistake putting the Borg in right at the start.

Richie: I thought that level worked really well.

Prezzer: Oh, it does, but it shouldn't have been there right away. It throws the Borg at you right from the off then once you've completed it and wandered around the bridge of the *Voyager* for a bit, the story has nowhere to go. Nothing left to offer you. Those are the two things most *Trek*-fans really want to do, so they should have been big rewards further on into the game. Those manta-ray things that came next were ludicrous by comparison.

Richie: Those levels did drag on. Going through the same generic corridors with the same old aliens coming at you wave after wave. It went on for far too long.

Mark: The game is very corridor based, but it did mean that when you reach the wide-open areas they really had impact. Like the shoot-outs in the cargo areas.

Prezzer: That's another thing...

Dave: Here we go.

Prezzer: That whole corridor thing. You're supposed to be running around *Voyager*, but very neatly they've shut off certain areas with force fields and blocked off loads of doors. I felt cheated. Maybe I'm being too cynical, but all the while I'm thinking 'fudge', 'programmer's conceit' and the like. They should have let you wander all over the place.

Mark: But you can go to your own quarters.

Prezzer: Only at one stage.

Richie: It still felt faithful to the series, though.

Dave: What annoyed me was that you couldn't really interact with your team mates. If you try talking to them they just mutter at you or wander off. You're supposed to



“What swung it for me was the same thing that worked so well in *Aliens Vs Predator*. The recognisable enemies”

MARTIN ON *ELITE FORCE*

be the leader of an away team so you should be able to give them orders.

Martin: *SWAT 3* style, you mean?

Dave: Yeah. You can't even tell them to cover you or stay put. You just look at them and they go, "What? I'm busy."

Mark: The AI of your team is quite good though. They do fight quite well and they don't just run around randomly.

Prezzer: I'm not sure about that.

They'd fire an awful lot but they never seemed to hit anyone. They'd just hold them at bay until I shot them.

Martin: Plus they're invincible. They never ever die.

Prezzer: Unless the plot demands it.

Mark: Not too many people have picked up on it, but the branching storyline worked really well. You wouldn't always have to complete a mission correctly for the game to progress.

Richie: I just thought it felt like you were playing through a two-hour special episode of the series. It wasn't on as grand a scale as a film plot would have been, but it would work as a two-part episode.

Dave: It is pretty short, now that you mention it.

Richie: It is quite short, but you enjoy it all the while you're there. You're completely engrossed in it.

Mark: I would play it again. That's not something I'd say about a lot of games these days, but I would go back to this.

Martin: I found it all a bit clunky. Especially in multiplayer. The maps were a bit small as well.

Prezzer: I did quite like the way you could go for a quick deathmatch 'training' session before a mission. That was a nice little touch.

Richie: Did you ever go into the mess hall before a mission and start shooting people? Seeing how long you can last is quite good fun.

Mark: You will get put into the brig eventually and receive a visit from Chakotay, though.

Prezzer: Oh, that was another thing. The 3D character models. Come on, we're nearly in the year

2001. Surely we can do better than these? They were awful. Clunky, rectangular. The faces were horrible.

Dave: Especially Janeway.

Martin: That's the *Quake III* engine, though.

Richie: There used to be skeletal animation in the *Quake III* engine, but Raven took it out because they wanted faster-paced gameplay.

Dave: Somehow they managed to make *Seven Of Nine* look unsexy.

Mark: Impossible.

VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

At last, a change from all that strategy and a welcome return to form for *Trek* FPS's following the debacle that was *Klingon Honour Guard*. A touch short perhaps, but otherwise great fun. Oh, and before we forget, Mark Hill wrote the uncredited review in #94. He promises to use the lost introduction in the future. Which is a shame.

SCORE	84% PCZ #94
DEVELOPER	Raven Software
PUBLISHER	Activision
PRICE	£34.99

TREK WARS

Lucas vs Roddenberry – who's the worst?

If there's one thing most people agree on it's that *Star Wars* is far, far better than *Star Trek* ever will be (*Christ, you can answer the letters we'll get on that one – Ed.*), even with the foetid carcass of shit that was *Episode One* hanging around the saga's neck. But that rule doesn't apply to the world of games.

Certainly both licenses have seen their fair share of stinkers in their time, but for the most part *Star Trek*'s gaming endeavours have had some bearing on the

original source material. Although games such as *Armada* are stretching the brand thinner than the Queen Mum's chances of making it through the winter, while the LucasArts camp continues to turn out games such as *Super Bombad Racing* (Yoda and Darth Maul in go-karts), *Masters Of Teras Kasi* (Luke vs Chewbacca in beat 'em up action) and *Demolition* (stock car racing – don't ask), then *Star Trek* lovers can feel secure in the knowledge that there's still some shred of credibility left in the old warhorse.



Trolls in go-karts. What could be more ridiculous?

THE NEXT NEXT-GENERATION



Epic space battles are on the way.

Is that a famous ship then?

What lies ahead for Trek

A bumper crop of *Trek* titles are all attempting to dilute the waters of playability even further over the next six months or so. Among the more promising ways to pass time before oblivion are *Away Team* – a top-down, squad-based strategy action thing that will have old farts like me shouting Laser Squad at the screen every three minutes – and *Bridge Commander*, an attempt to finally get the large-scale combat simulation right.

Speaking of final chances, *DS9: The Fallen* is probably going to be *Trek*'s last chance to make a decent *Deep Space Nine* game (previous horrors included the abysmal *Myst*-like *Harbringer*) before we give up on Sisko, Quark and the gang for good. The third-person *Unreal*-powered action romp is looking pretty good at the moment, though, so fingers crossed. *Dominion Wars* is also set around that era of the *Trek* timeline, but focuses more on ships and combat than on characters.

Finally, there's *Starfleet Command 2*. If you've read the preceding conversation you'll know that the first game is still quite playable, but had begun to date badly. Here's hoping that developers can give us the game we all hope they can.

AND THE WINNER IS...

More negatives than positives, but one manages to shine

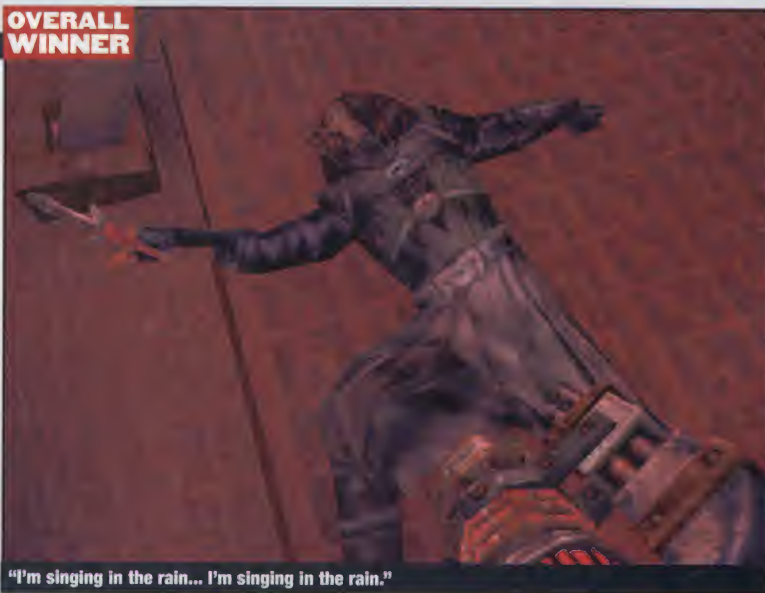
No surprises that the visceral thrills of *Elite Force* took top honours at the end of the day. As Richie points out, "It appeals whether or not you're a *Star Trek* fan." Martin agreed adding that it recreates most of what you get on the show. "I still think it's the best FPS since *Half-Life*," added Mark.

A close second was *Starfleet Command*. "It's probably the best use of the *Star Trek* licence," argued Dave. "The sequel should prove very interesting," he added. *Birth Of The Federation* surprised

most of us by still retaining a level of playability, despite the long-term problems. "It should have been the best *Trek* game," opines Richie, "but it pales too quickly."

It's fair to say that even *Elite Force* hasn't really captured the true *Star Trek* spirit, relying more on the adrenaline thrills common to all FPS titles to make its impact. Although *Starfleet Command* came close, we all pretty much agreed that we're still waiting for the ultimate *Star Trek* game to appear. Roll on 2001.

OVERALL WINNER



"I'm singing in the rain... I'm singing in the rain."

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★ **CON ARTIST** Martin Korda

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

★ £9.99 • Infogrames • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** PCI Local Bus video card **WE SAY** PII 266, 64Mb RAM and at least an 8Mb 3D card

BEST BUY

Z A game that needs little introduction from us, *Unreal Tournament* took the first-person-shooter genre by storm when it was released last year, winning Game Of The Year in our Reader Awards. So all in all, it's not too bad. Understatements aside, this is the biggest amount of fragging fun you can currently have on your PC, without having to go online to play *Counter-Strike* with a bunch of strangers. The action is fast-paced and manic, but most importantly, the bots have a near life-like quality. In fact, they're often more fun to play against than humans, because once you beat them they don't go round whining that they only lost because their mouse was broken and they had a crap ping rate.

All the game types are here, from good old deathmatch to CTF levels. You've also got a massive selection of mutators to wade through, and if you do fancy indulging in some multiplayer action, then you and up to 15 others can have a massive fragfest to satisfy your human desires for mindless violence and bloodlust. If you don't already own this game, then there's no excuse for not buying it now, and if you still can't afford it, tell your loved ones that all you want for Christmas is a copy of *Unreal Tournament*.

PCZVERDICT

90%



Surprise...



Is it sunny in here?



Rack up another kill for the Nameless One.



Devilishly good fun.



"You'll have someone's eye out with those."

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

★ £9.99 • EA • Out now

TECH SPECS

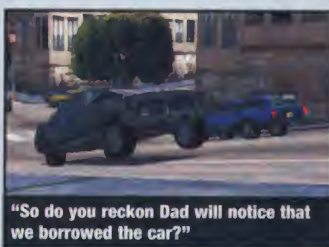
MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 2Mb video card **WE SAY** PII 266, 64Mb RAM and at least a 4Mb 3D card

If you're a politician, dentist, tax man or dominatrix, you'll feel right at home with *DK2*'s idea of administering pain to nice people. Basically, it's a god sim in which you construct a dungeon inhabited by foul creatures and booby traps, which are fiendish enough to repel the attacks of a bunch of rich boys in armour who believe it's their quest to stop you expanding your realm.

Unlike many strategy games, you have no direct control over the actions of your minions, which can make *DK2* both hugely entertaining and incredibly frustrating. However, the AI is generally of a high standard and there's huge scope for expanding your dungeons. The only real problem is that the whole thing starts getting repetitive a little too quickly for comfort.

PCZVERDICT

75%



"So do you reckon Dad will notice that we borrowed the car?"

DRIVER

★ £9.99 • Infogrames • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** PII 266, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card

If you've always harboured a secret ambition to be a getaway driver, then look no further, as the basic idea here is to drive as fast as you can around a selection of cities without trashing your wheels or getting lynched by the cops.

There are more than 40 missions for you to complete, and the excellent



"This is no place to be practicing your three-point turns."

atmosphere and sounds will have '70s retro lovers endlessly boring you about how much it reminds them of *Starsky & Hutch*.

Unfortunately there's no multiplayer option, and the game is poorer for it, while the driving test you have to pass at the start is so infuriating you're tempted to blowtorch the CD. In short, it's not as good as the *Midtown Madness* games, but for ten quid you could do a lot worse.

PCZVERDICT

72%

EA COMPILATIONS NO: 3

★ £19.99 • EA • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 MMX Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 2Mb video card **WE SAY** PII 266, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card

The first of this month's EA compilations bears more than a passing resemblance to the England football team, in that it's a poor selection of inadequates that have been thrown together with very little thought.

FA Premier League Stars is just an average soccer sim, while *Football Manager 2000* doesn't even get close to competing with the *CM* games. *Superbike World Championship* may have been the best bike sim of its time, but it's really beginning to show its age. Basically, this selection doesn't offer enough to deserve either your time or your money, especially when it's surrounded by such prestigious company.

PCZ VERDICT

52%



A sudden gust of wind nearly took out the entire field.



United losing. That's what we like to see



Owen saves Liverpool... again.

EA COMPILATIONS NO: 4

★ £19.99 • EA • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 MMX Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PII 300, 64Mb RAM and at least an 8Mb 3D card



This is one of the best compilations we've seen in a long time. If you sold *System Shock 2* on its own for £20 you wouldn't hear too many complaints from us. However, throw in two other relatively good titles (*Theme Park World* and *Need For Speed: Road Challenge*), and you leave us looking on more suspiciously than a wife who's just caught her husband naked on a bed with a hoover in his hand.

Try as we might though, we couldn't find too much wrong with this particular selection. *System Shock 2* is a classic in its own right, mixing RPG, FPS and horror

elements to create one of the finest gaming experiences you're ever likely to play. *Theme Park World* puts you in control of your very own amusement park, and although it's inferior to *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, it'll still provide you with hours of entertainment. *NFS: Road Challenge* rounds the package off nicely, allowing you to indulge in some mindless racing action if it all gets a bit too serious for you. If you're only going to buy one of the three compilations featured on these pages, then make sure it's this one.

PCZ VERDICT

85%



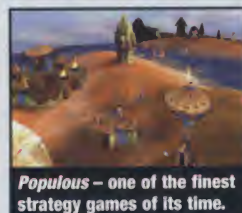
After a stint as a Hollywood superstar, King Kong opened his own theme park.



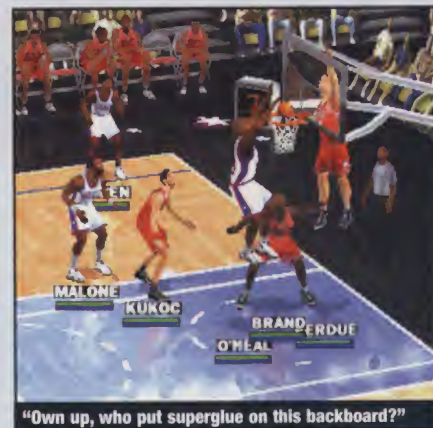
Small gun. Big robot. No contest.



Daddy bought this for me.



Populous - one of the finest strategy games of its time.



"Own up, who put superglue on this backboard?"

EA COMPILATIONS NO: 5

★ £19.99 • EA • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PII 300, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card

Not as impressive as *EAC No: 4*, but infinitely better than *No: 3*, this collection is well worth the effort of emptying out your copper jar. Featuring two games currently in our Top 100 (*NBA Live 2000* and *Need For Speed Porsche 2000*) you can rest assured that you're going to get your money's worth.

NBA Live 2000 has all the polish that you'd normally associate with an EA Sports game (*FA Premier League Stars* excluded), with enough options and statistics to satisfy even the most ardent

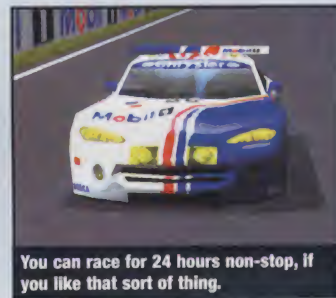
NBA fan. *NFS Porsche 2000* provides some of the best seat-of-your-pants racing action you can play on the PC, with realism replaced by pure arcade mayhem. The package is finished off by one of the finest strategy games of its time, *Populous: The Beginning*, which although fun, seems a slightly strange choice given the arcadey nature of the other two games. However, you could find a lot worse under your tree.

PCZ VERDICT

77%



Out of my way.



You can race for 24 hours non-stop, if you like that sort of thing.

LE MANS 24 HOURS

★ £9.99 • Infogrames • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** P450, 64Mb RAM and a 12Mb 3D card



As driving games go, this is one of the better ones the PC has to offer. Both arcade and simulation fans are catered for, with just about the right amount of options to keep you engrossed without swamping you with pointless jargon and excess car set-up screens.

One of its greatest strengths is its driving model, which not only feels realistic, but throws up a lasting challenge that will keep you interested for weeks on end. If you're feeling particularly anti-social for a day, you can try your hand at the 24 hour race, and by that we mean you actually race for 24 hours. Once you learn to ignore the dull graphics and some of the most annoying commentary known to man, you'll soon discover that *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a real bargain at just ten quid. Now you can't say fairer than that.

PCZ VERDICT

81%

How
do you put
the magic
back in her
life?

Show
her your
wand!

Simon the Sorcerer 3D

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Real-time 3D adventure with over 60
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Have fun with the ribald jokes, sly
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Complex, humorous and highly
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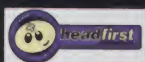
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- Highly developed economical element:
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 - Inventive module for managing human resources.
- Over 20 planets to conquer.
- Over 100 units all fully upgradeable.

FEEDBACK

This month you're being unusually positive about games.

Martin Korda deals with your comments with a hint of suspicion

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email them to us at letters.pczone@denns.co.uk with 'Feedback' in the subject line.

DEUS EX

REVIEWED #93, *PCZ* September
SCORE 94%

What we thought

Z "A game that, in our opinion, has just leap-frogged *System Shock 2* as the benchmark in the role-playing genre."

What you said

"Having finally completed *Deus Ex* I can say that it's unlike anything I've played before. It merges aspects from several other genres (not all successfully) to create a truly unique experience. Some of its ideas do get repetitive, such as hacking computers and spending large amounts of time in the dark running low on bio energy for your light. The middle third of the game (Hong Kong, mainly) takes a great deal of time and energy

spoiling it for others, but the three choices you're presented with and the way they unfold are truly amazing. I think games like this are the future and now I can't wait to see Ion Storm's next release.

Paul Sutton

★ "I have just completed the mighty *Deus Ex*, and in answer to the letter from A Complaint (oh, the wit) in *PCZ* #94, I would like to add this. I also loved *System Shock 2*. In fact, I thought it was the greatest game ever. The reason I think *Deus Ex* now holds this honour, is because the world in which you play makes so much more sense. There are other people in this world who can look after themselves, compared to *SS2* where even the greatest military specialists were dead when you found them. *Deus Ex* has a storyline, a world, an AI and a purpose that all seem to add up to a very complete world, and the terrific cast of characters and plot (and some of the amazing augmentations you can install) add a fantastic atmosphere. Also, there's nothing wrong with the graphics whatsoever. The only complaint I have, is that you have to fight weird parrot creatures.

Peter Canning

★ "What is A Complaint" in *PCZ* #94 on about? He/she has basically tried to review a title

that he/she hasn't even played the demo of. Get a grip mate. If you can't see the text on data pads or read the speech script then you either have a weedy computer or need some glasses. *Deus Ex* needs loads of RAM and a good graphics card to make it work. I don't think totally destructive feedback with regards to any game is either fair or justified if one hasn't bothered to play the game on the type of machine that it was intended to be played on. My advice to A Complaint is to upgrade and fire up the demo again. If you thought *SS2* was fantastic then prepare to be amazed by *Deus Ex*.

Jim Dempster

Comment

Deus Ex, Deus Ex, Deus Ex, that's all we ever hear around here. If it's not Mallo banging on about it all the time, then it's you lot... and rightly so we say. Deus Ex is a gaming masterpiece and the fact that two thirds of this month's Feedback letters are about it just goes to prove how popular it's become. Detractors such as A Complaint (bet you're glad you didn't send in your real name now) seem to be receiving more criticism than the game itself. However, as much as we love it, we think it's time to move on to pastures new, so please start sending us some comments on games other than this RPG epic. After all, there's only so many ways we can say, that this is easily the best game of the year so far.

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

REVIEWED #94, *PCZ* October
SCORE 84%

What we thought

PCZ "Considering the lack of competition, *Voyager* is probably the best single-player FPS since *Half-Life*. It has a truly interactive story, a team that fights on your side intelligently



and it uses the best engine around.

There's still plenty of room for improvement though..."

What you said

★ "I think you were spot on with your score for *Elite Force*. I managed to complete it in ten hours on the Normal difficulty setting, which I felt was a bit short. The story could have been developed a bit further.

At first I played as Alex (the bloke) and found that one of the hazard team members was flirting with me (Telsia Murphy). She was just about to ask me out when Neelix came over and asked me how things were going, at which point she walked off. I then decided to replay the game as a woman (thinking that one of the boy members of the hazard team would flirt with me) and I was amazed to discover that Telsia came onto me again. Is Telsia a bi-sexual or has Raven made a huge cock-up?

The multiplayer mode is excellent, even though it only has three modes of play. Raven really could have done with putting in a few more. In conclusion, 84 per cent is a fair score for this game, and I think it'll be one of the games of the year.

Richard Jones

★ "*Deus Ex*: £30, three weeks of absorbing gaming. *System Shock 2*: £20, two weeks of slightly frustrating gaming. *Voyager: Elite Force*: £30, two-and-a-half days of gaming. This isn't a bad game (and I'm not comparing it to the RPGs above), but its single, critical flaw is that it's way, way too short. While I'm not an incredible FPS player, I set the game on Challenging skill, and played it from start to finish during the course of a bank holiday weekend. If you're thinking about buying this – don't. Wait two or three months and pick it up for £15 or £20 – not £30. The Multiplay option is fun (if a little mindless), but it still doesn't warrant the price.

Chris Burns

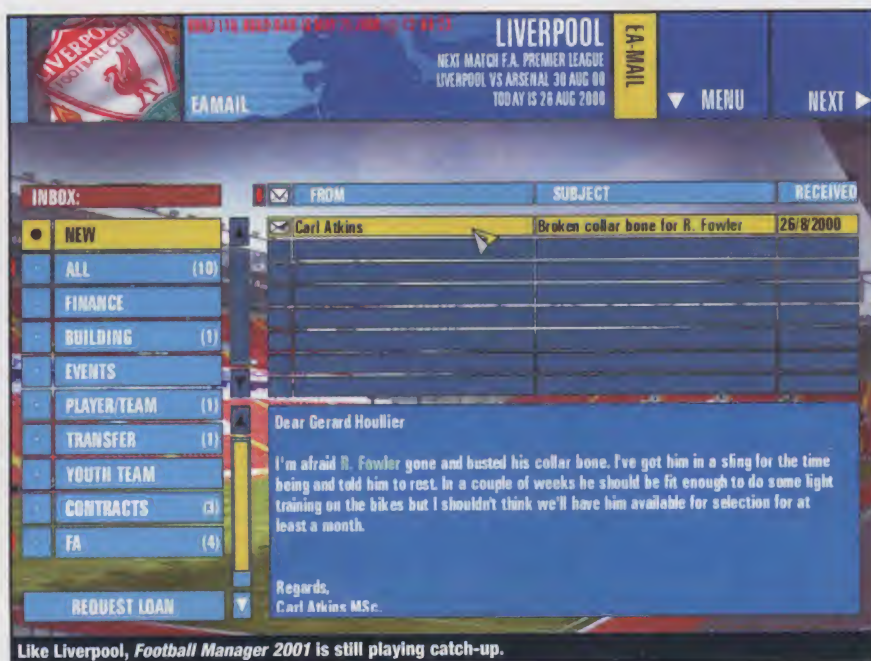
“*Deus Ex* has a storyline, an AI and a purpose that add up to a very complete world”

PETER CANNING CATCHES *DEUS EX* FEVER

to work through, and all you seem to do is penetrate one fortress after another. It's a huge relief once you make it through to Paris. However, the ending more than justifies the work you put in. I won't say too much for fear of

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force – it's just too damned short.





Like Liverpool, *Football Manager 2001* is still playing catch-up.

➔ "I'm a great fan of *Voyager* and have been eagerly awaiting your review for several months. I downloaded the demo and thought it was amazing. Then your review clinched it and I went straight down to my local games emporium and purchased a copy. I've come to the conclusion that it's excellent. The atmosphere is spot on, the graphics superb and the sound amazing. However, you failed to mention in your review that the game is far too short. I bought it on a Saturday and by Monday I'd completed it. It wasn't even as though I'd been playing non-stop. The eight levels on offer just aren't enough. Is Raven just lazy? Did they get bored with designing levels for this otherwise superb game? Even the multiplayer option doesn't make up for this. Yes, you can shoot Neelix, but lets face it, it's the same as *Quake III*, but without the blood.

Christian Briddon

Comment

Many of you are complaining that it's way too short (the game that is) and we couldn't agree more (and I quote), "...the game is somewhat on the short side." It's a real shame because, overall, this is one of the finest single-player FPSs we've ever played (even though it's a bit on the repetitive side), and the multiplayer option isn't bad either. Richard, in regards to your comment on the lovely Telsia, it's possible that this was an oversight on Raven's part. But let's not complain too much, because as oversights go, we think it's a pretty good one to have to be stuck with.

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2001

REVIEWED #94, PCZ October
SCORE 67%

What we thought

"*FM 2001* tries to tread that middle ground, offering more depth and complexity for those who want it and letting average gamers get on with it without having to worry, but it's just that it doesn't quite work."

What you said

★ "I've got so many comments, all good, of course, to say about this exquisite masterpiece. Let's start with realism. The stats, in my point of view, are totally correct, rather than being randomly made up rubbish, like *FWM*. The player and staff interaction totally rocks and the interface speaks for itself. I'm sure Mark Hill agrees with me on this. It's a truly sensational example of how games of this genre should look and feel."

M Whitmore

★ "I'm writing to complain about the score you gave *Football Manager 2001*. The fact that you concentrate on the bad aspects of the game in your review says it all. OK, I accept that in your opinion the *CM* series is better, but surely it's a matter of personal opinion. If you were a true fan of football management games in general, you would appreciate that *FM01* has many features that *CM00/01* doesn't have.

"I also like the way that you slag off the transfer system without even saying why it's bad. It's straight-forward, easy to use and to the point. You can select the players you want in order of rating, price or position. What

more do you need? Just because the transfer list doesn't have the players that you want, doesn't make it a bad one.

"The other thing you slyly forgot to mention were the outstanding loading times for the game. Creating a new game takes ten seconds, as opposed to the ten minutes in *CM00/01*. *CM00/01* boasts many features which, to be honest, most of us hardly ever use, whereas *FM00/01* concentrates on more important

"All in all this is a benchmark game for any fan of football management games"

ARISTOS TOFALLIS SINGS THE PRAISES OF *FM 2001*

and interesting features, such as viewing the effects of your tactical changes (as opposed to flashing text on the screen; QBASIC stuff), training, stadium development and changing your ticket prices for those must-watch games.

All in all this is a benchmark game for any fan of football management games, and well worth it at just £19.99.

Aristos Tofallis

Comment

Yes Aristos, you're right, it is a matter of personal opinion, and in our collective *PC ZONE* opinion, we think *CM* is much better. There's also the fact that *CM3* is the fastest selling game of all time in the UK, which speaks volumes. If you prefer *Football Manager 2001* then fair enough, and yes the idea of being able to watch the matches and see your tactical changes first hand is a great idea. The problem is that in *FM2001*, it just doesn't work.

Try watching a match between Manchester United and Barcelona, for example. The teams play like mediocre Nationwide Conference teams, and it's this that makes the matches extremely boring to watch. We also had some question marks over some of the player stats, which were very unrealistic. If you're still in any doubt as to why *Champ Manager* is the best footy series ever, then check out our definitive review in last month's issue.

DAIKATANA

What we thought

"We're sure that Eidos and John Romero will be pleased to see the back of it. Our advice? Keep your money in your pocket."

What you said

"Regarding the extremely biased and negative misrepresentation of *Daikatana* in *PC ZONE* I tried to approach the game with an open mind and realistic expectations. I was soon having a lot of fun playing it, so much so that I've started replaying it.

In the interests of fairness and balance, these are the aspects I liked about the game: a huge amount of variation and diversity; strongly themed and distinctive episodes; smooth and comfortable control and

tactical aspects of using sidekicks; the *Daikatana*'s power adds novelty; extremely rich features; inspiration for custom maps; stylish and tasteful menus and HUD."

Shambler

★ "I've played and completed *Daikatana* twice now and I have to say that I totally disagree with your negative review of the game. The graphics may not be great, but the gameplay is really intense and you're constantly on the edge of your seat. Putting different weapons in all the different ages was a stroke of genius on Romero's part, and I think he has managed to get the game just right in terms of teamwork within a single-player FPS. 80 per cent would have been a fairer score.

John Wallace

Comment

Different weapons in each age, eh? A stroke of genius indeed. Let's be honest, you're hardly going to have rocket launchers in ancient Greece now are you, so of course you'd expect different weapons for every stage. Shambler, regarding the unrealistic and over-positive misrepresentation of *Daikatana* in your letter, these are the aspects we didn't like about the game: a huge lack of variation and diversity; weakly themed episodes; those pesky save games; boring and unstylish weapons; cumbersome gameplay; some poorly designed maps; uninspiring atmosphere in most places; uninteresting design touches; crap looking skins; some downright laughable monsters; a rubbish storyline; few subplots; tactical annoyances caused by sidekicks who don't do what they're told; the *Daikatana* is next to useless; dull features; lack of inspiration for custom maps; archaic-looking menus and HUD. Apart from that, though, we loved it. ☺



We've actually found two people who like *Daikatana*.

excessive force



WingMan Force 3D



WingMan RumblePad™



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It's the closest thing to reality. WingMan® Force 3D. Get the advantage you need to win, the sensations you need to make it real. Feel the force, with Logitech. www.logitech.com

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Logitech

A NEED FOR SPEED

★ ONLINE EDITOR Richie Shoemaker



As I write this, I am surfing the Internet, at home, using a modem that has given me over two years of trusty service. Rarely has it failed me and yet, within 24 hours, I will repay its lengthy service by casting it into

the abyss that is my games cupboard. I almost feel sorry for it.

Tomorrow a BT engineer will drop by and do what needs to be done so that I can surf the Net once more. ADSL is coming to Cobbler's Mansion.

Rather than go on the blag as so many journalists do, I registered for BT's Openworld service. Consequently, I will be parting with £40 a month – the cost of an unmemorable night out – so that I can do on the Net exactly what I've always been doing (playing games), only faster.

Well no. As I was belatedly informed a couple of days ago, ADSL won't actually speed anything up. As an example, compared to a normal analogue modem, ADSL is like having a head ten times the normal size atop your normal body. To use a favourite industry analogy, ADSL just makes the pipe wider. It doesn't push information through any quicker – not until we are all interconnected with fibre-optic cabling anyway.

The good news is that as well as playing *Counter-Strike*, I'll be able to talk to those I will be slaughtering, all without any noticeable slowdown. On a good day, I'll even be able to download extra levels. A small point perhaps, but I'll also be able to go online without thinking about it. I won't have to dial-in. I can't wait. Anyone want an old modem?

PCZONLINE REVIEWS

126 STARPEACE

128 SOLDIER OF FORTUNE GOLD V1.06

129 SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION V1.6.6.0

130 BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN

130 SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR V1.12

ONLINE REVIEWS POLICY

When it comes to mods and total conversions (TCs) for games such *Half-Life*, they are often released in beta form (ie unfinished) and are generally being updated constantly. When we review them we will always try to take into consideration that they are often worked on by teams working just for the love of it and released free for our enjoyment. Even so, there is a lot of pap out there and downloading such things can often be a waste of good surfing time.

Similarly, with retail online games such as *EverQuest*, the code is always being updated, and although we can't provide regular updates, we will try to review major ones as and when they occur.

NEWS



Even though it seems to be a mixed prison, these boys only seem to have eyes for each other – meeting outside the toilets at every opportunity.

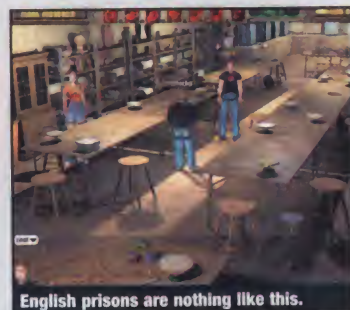
THE PRISON

You're goin' daahn – and it ain't pretty

Considering that the idea was a sound one, Channel 5's series *Jailbreak* could hardly have been worse. Rushed to our screens to cash in on the *Big Brother* buzz, it was for those that missed it, simply based around a bunch of faceless citizens from all walks of life – including a stripper to help boost ratings. The first to escape their corrugated confines would win a 100 grand. No one watched, fewer cared, but it seems Spanish developer Dinamic has seen promise in the idea for an online game they are currently coding called *The Prison*.

In reality, aside from the bleak locale, *The Prison* has as much in common with *Jailbreak* as *Jailbreak* did with entertainment. An online role-playing game, *The Prison* locks you up with other online inmates and either together or alone, the aim is to escape. As with all RPGs, *The Prison* allows players to set up their characters before doing time, allowing those who want to get into character to do so, as one of a number of felons. How you interact with other prisoners is central to success. If you don't want to be Bubba's bitch, you're going to have to know how to deal with other inmates. Then there are the scary guards. Although we don't know yet if they will be player controlled or not, or if players caught down a hole have to serve time in solitary confinement, or get transferred to max security cells.

No release has been set for *The Prison* yet, but if you understand Spanish, you might unearth one at www.laprision.com. Be sure to drop us a line when you find out. Cheers.



English prisons are nothing like this.



Inmates will be able to play poker and the recently released *Euro League Football*.



You don't need a translator to tell you one of these guys will soon be on his knees.



FULL STREAM AHEAD

With Gameplay's new streaming technology, we may soon be buying and renting games without leaving the house

It's very rare for us here at the ZONE offices to get excited about a new technology. After all, when you're faced with the latest gadgets and gizmos on a daily basis, it's easy to feel like you've seen it all. However, at a recent showcase of products for BT's new ADSL service, Gameplay was showing off a technology that made us stand agog like the first time we saw *Quake* running on a Voodoo 1 – its new games portal, Instant Gameplay.

The new site will initially be available only to subscribers of the Freeserve Plus and BT Openworld ADSL networks. The site aims to bring computer gaming to the mass market by making them easily accessible at the

heavily encrypted to stop piracy and can only be opened using a special data 'key' supplied separately. Once you've purchased the game, it's yours just as if you had bought it from a shop. The only difference is that you have no box or CD and didn't have to make the trip to the shop.

The second way, however, is slightly more revolutionary and was what had us picking our jaws up off the floor. Gameplay is calling it Click And Play and has created a way of renting games across the Net without even having to download them to your PC. From a huge list of AAA titles on the Gameplay website, we saw *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* selected and instantly

technology at some time on the web, usually while viewing a video or listening to a sound file as it downloads to our PC, Gameplay has just taken the process to its logical conclusion. After all, why have around a gigabyte of data on your PC when you only ever need a few megabytes at any one time? It's only with the advent of broadband technology that this has become a reality. With ADSL

offering download speeds starting at 512Kbps, those few megabytes you need are going to arrive at your PC fast enough to cope with the best of today's games.

Prices have not yet been finalised for either the Save And Play or Click And Play services. But, with distribution costs drastically reduced, it can only bring the price of gaming down even further.

“Gameplay aims to bring computer gaming to the masses. It has created a way of renting games across the Net without even having to download them to your PC”

click of a button from your PC desktop, without ever having to take a step into your local games shop.

Delivering games over the Internet can be done in two ways. The first, which Gameplay is calling Save And Play, allows you to choose the game you wish to buy from its online catalogue and simply download the 650Mb CD to your PC. The game is

a loading screen appeared with a progress meter, which took just under a minute to complete. There in front of us, in less time than some games take to load a level was Lara's latest escapades playing on the PC – it's as if the hard drive containing the game was at the end of the ADSL connection.

Most of us have come across this



It's incredibly easy. Just choose your game and then either try it or buy it.



The selected games should only take a minute or so to download.



Watch a video of the game before you decide to part with your hard-earned moolah.

3RD WORLD

Right on, commander!

Another attempt to create an online atmosphere reminiscent of the classic *Elite* space trading game is on the horizon in the form of *3rd World*. Trading, piracy, bounty hunting and commerce are all to be melded into a cohesive 3D galaxy. The producers are aiming to make the game free of rules, so expect to see a lot of intensive player-on-player action and a large degree of anarchy in space.

Developer XYZ is not creating an epic storyline or multiple quests to follow. Instead the game will be defined as little as possible to let gamers play by their own rules. Unlike many other online *Elite* wannabes, *3rd World* will allow you to disembark

your space ship and go wandering around various space stations – all rendered in good old isometric 3D.

The producers want each and every player to be able to look unique and this goes beyond the characters and onto the ships themselves – a wide variety of components is promised with many unique or special items available. Everybody exists in one game environment, so the playing arena is going to be fairly large and truly unique items will have a massive potential buying audience.

3rd World envisages players having the ability to forge empires and go on galactic rampages, yet

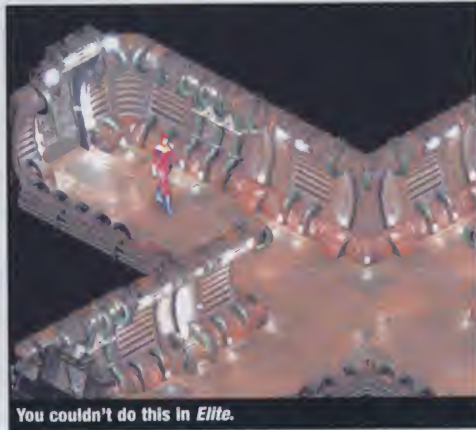


Looking like an updated *Adder*, *Elite* fans will spot the similarities already.

details on how this will be handled are sketchy at best. Death can occur in a number of ways – including dying in a space station while offline – but how the death system is set up remains an unknown. We'll just have to wait until beta testing around Q2 2001 to get more details on this promising game. For now you can keep up to date by visiting www.3rdworld.cc.



Pilots will gain experience points as in traditional RPGs.



You couldn't do this in *Elite*.



Leaving the safety of their local space port, online players will be able to take to the stars to trade and fight.

SOCCERSIM

Beating *Champ Man* to the online football crown?

For the last few years one thing has consistently topped our online gaming wish list: *Championship Manager Online*. The world of football is realistically recreated in the single-player game to the last Mozambican under-21 international,

encompassing the most satisfying transfer system and tactical set-up ever devised. When Sports

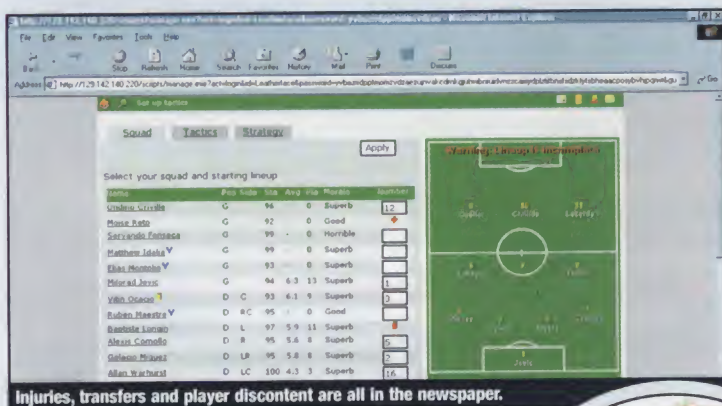
Interactive announced we'd have to wait until 2002 for the release of *CM4*, our hearts sank. Until we discovered *SoccerSim*. At first it seems like a watered down version of *CM* in its infancy, but it is actually responsible for more wasted *ZONE* office hours than any other game bar *Counter-Strike*.

After browsing through every team in the continent via a map of Europe you choose an unmanaged team and apply for the job. The biggest attraction of *SoccerSim* is that it puts you in a world full of real

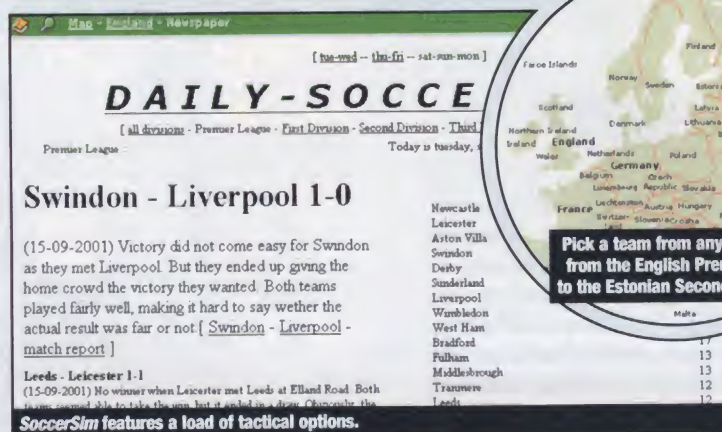
managers (the game we're playing has around 700), with players you can buy, loan, train and give individual orders to.

The game is the product of Danish developers Peter Strand and Martin Bresson, who've been working on it for two and a half years. Currently at Beta-testing stage, the players still have fictional names and stats, although we're assured the finished version will feature real players. They don't expect to be ready for launching until next Spring: "But since *SoccerSim* is server-side only software (ie no downloads or installations by the end user)" says Peter, "updating the game with bug fixes and new features is easy. We just update the servers. So, we'll not be tied down by moving from V1 to V2 in the traditional sense."

Instead of buying a disc you'll pay a subscription and from our experience so far it will certainly be worth it. If you want to see what all the fuss is about, head to www.soccersim.com and become a beta-tester yourself.



Injuries, transfers and player discontent are all in the newspaper.



Pick a team from any country, from the English Premiership to the Estonian Second Division.

"The best of
both worlds in
strategy gaming
combine their
strengths"

PC GAMING WORLD,
8/2000

"If you think
real-time strategy is
too fast-paced and
turn-based strategy
is too ponderous,
maybe you should be
thinking about a game
that combines the two.
The Andosia War
from Blue Byte
aims to do just that..."

PC ZONE, 7/2000

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Where Turn Based and Real Time Meet...
Strategy Gaming will Never be the Same!

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"I do like a nice goblin."

FAIRY STORIES

Snuff is enough for *EverQuest* developers

AD&D and RPG fans have long been writing fan-fiction – most of it utter drivel. Often this comes from the core of the best role-players within the games rather than proper writers, but when AD&D meets its evil side what happens then?

Verant and Sony Interactive creators and publishers respectively of the hit online role-player *EverQuest* recently took the unprecedented action of banning a player from their game for publishing some fiction on a third-party bulletin board. Despite a questionable topic, the rape and torture of another elfling, the story was at least in keeping with long established aspects of the character, an evil Dark Elf. The game's own

web literature cites torture and mayhem for these characters and there's even a quest within the game that involves killing a pregnant halfling woman – who has the moral high ground here?

In this case however, an 'outraged parent' contacted Sony and the mad-dog that is their Customer Relations department fell with a vengeance upon the author, 'Mystere', stating: "We don't want your sort of people". No matter that Mystere is a long-established *EverQuest* player or that she is a recognised and respected role-player, the *EverQuest* team decided that she couldn't play anymore.

Questions remain about why the action was taken on the basis of stopping 'younger

players seeing such trash', when the games own terms and conditions state that players must be over 18 to play. Add to that the fact that the website that published the story is neither under Sony or Verant control and that the story itself had been up for months and the questions get murkier still. Could it be that it had something to do with the 'outraged parent' contacting the media?

While half an apology has been granted to Mystere over the manner in which she was arbitrarily ousted, she remains an outcast from the game, despite resignation protests and a storm of outrage from other gamers. It seems that the *EverQuest* tagline of 'Your in our world now' extends way beyond the game. Beware.



Death is a real possibility.



Another MMORPG – whatever that means.

CAERON 3000

Where death stalks your every move

Caeron 3000, formerly known as *Infinium*, is a sci-fi massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) that's still in early development and aims to introduce some aspects away from the norm, specifically the way in which the untimely matter of death is broached.

Permanent character death is a distinct possibility in *Caeron 3000*, meaning once you die, you die for good and must start all over again, though an insurance system via cloning your character lowers the probability of this quite considerably. Another interesting aspect of the game is towards more dynamic NPCs – you know the usually stunted computer characters that live their lives in one spot with a two sentence vocabulary. In *Caeron 3000* the developers want to animate the NPCs with their own families and stories giving them a much more lively feel.

On top of this, *Caeron 3000* won't be introducing rigid class systems. The player can choose to follow any path in enhancing their character – if you can find a trainer in that field, you can train to use it. There is no release date as yet and *Caeron* is still in an early pre-alpha stage of development – you can track its progress and get more information from its homepage at www.magiqueproductions.com.



SHORTS

GET WISE TO QUAKE

Wise In Death is a curious new mod for *Quake III* that allows players to upgrade their characters by cashing in frags to increase weapon power and player stats in agility, health and stealth. We've yet to try it out, but you can by downloading version 1.2 of the mod, which is currently available at www.planetquake.com/wid



NEW WORLD ORDER

It seems the bandwagon started by *Counter-Strike* is speeding up rather than slowing down with news that Insomnia Software (www.insomniasoftware.com) is itself developing a real-world team-based multiplayer game, one of course powered by their own 3D engine.

New World Order, which sets The Syndicate (bad guys) against the GAT (good), allows players to choose from a number of specialist roles, *Team Fortress*-style, from snipers to explosives experts and as well as team vs team games, we can expect a number of co-operative missions against AI opponents.



TACOPS UPDATES

Tactical Ops, one of many *Counter-Strike*-style mods in circulation for *Unreal Tournament* has recently been updated to beta 1.6, offering updated maps and a few bugfixes. We rather liked the mod when we took a look at it two issues ago and you can be sure we'll be visiting www.tactical-ops.net to get a hold of the new version.



THE BEST STRATEGY IS TO GET PRACTISING
BEFORE YOUR MATES BUY THEM TOO



SUDDEN STRIKE



COMMAND & CONQUER RED ALERT 2



CRIMSON SKIES



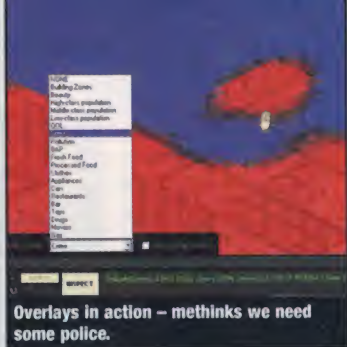
SACRIFICE

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON





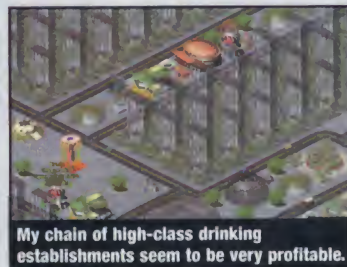
It's amazing what a single lorry can do.



Overlays in action – methinks we need some police.



Next year he's history.



My chain of high-class drinking establishments seem to be very profitable.

STARPEACE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Oceanus
PUBLISHER Monte Cristo
WEBSITE www.starpeace.net
RELEASE DATE November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Highly detailed business simulation
- ★ Competition/co-operation with other gamers
- ★ RPG element with city and planetary elections
- ★ Multiple paths to success



The smart side of town.

Jed Norton has always fancied himself as the hot-shot billionaire president of a global company. All freelancers dream the same dream

Starpeace is an online-only massively multiplayer game that allows you to run your own futuristic version of the Branson empire. Set vaguely in the near future you are immersed in a series of parallel worlds waiting to be colonised by disenfranchised members of an overpopulated earth. Granted a \$1 billion loan, your task is to make a personal fortune as well as providing a new home for millions of other colonists. While immediately reminiscent of games such as *SimCity* and *Corporation*, *Starpeace* is a much more detailed game with multiple layers to it. A management game at its core, it also encompasses aspects of an RPG with the ability for gamers to become city mayors or planetary presidents. The depth of the game is immense in terms of corporate relationships and tech-trees. However, it's a strangely

easy game to get into as a newcomer.

The real lure of the game is that player co-operation (or conflict) forms an integral part of gameplay – you simply can't succeed on your own and alliances between corporations is a must at some stage.

Battling corporations may not seem the highest form of online combat, but it is surprisingly addictive. As an investor, you can form any number of companies, each of which must subscribe to a seal, or business faction, each requiring their own support buildings. Each faction allows a different set of research as well as varying benefits and drawbacks.

CHEAPER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER

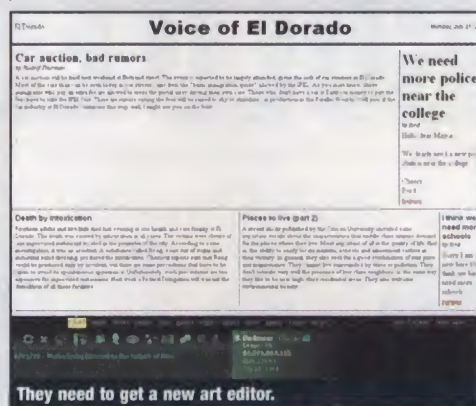
When starting the game you often just need to find an area of a city that isn't covered by another company's services or products – as soon as competition arrives things get

BETA TEST

interesting. As well as being able to juggle the costs of your suppliers and outlets you can research different aspects of both production and retail.

Let's go to a bar: as a bar owner I can lower the price of booze to attract more customers, alternatively I can offer different services – from ethnic cocktails to lap dancing – and encourage customers that way. Meanwhile, the competition may be offering higher quality drinks with bouncers at the doors and a proof of age system. Often the winner of these battles depends on the clients – different class workers look for different types of bars – the low class will drink anywhere so long as it's cheap and fun, the upper crust rarely go near bars unless they are exclusive.

Simple so far? Let's add another layer, then... the above choices also affect your prestige – running seedy X-rated bars, for instance, has a



negative effect on your prestige and that affects your chances of becoming the local city mayor. So what? Well mayors get to zone all the land in a city and set and gather the taxes, so as mayor you can tailor the city to meet your own needs to a large degree. Mind you, upset too many gamers' businesses and you will see them move to other cities – so it becomes a real political juggling

“The real lure of the game is that player co-operation (or conflict) forms an integral part of the gameplay”

act. And that's where the RPG element comes into play – mayoral elections are just that – you must run an online campaign to become elected. Get the job and do the wrong thing and it won't be long before you find yourself un-elected.

LET'S MAKE LOTS OF MONEY

The combination of the financial and political arenas makes for some interesting situations and competition can get quite fierce. Alliances are formed and veritable wars can be fought for control of commodities or areas in a city. The pace of the game is quite fast – five game years pass in a day – but, even so, it can take quite a few days to start to make significant money and advance in the game. Despite this, the pace of the game is relaxed in that it is safe to let your companies run themselves for a few days, financial ruin is not something that happens overnight (unless you've stretched yourself very thinly).

Graphically, *Starpeace* is more than adequate and the whole shebang runs

in a very enhanced browser-based system. Nice features include the ability to personalise your portraits and check your companies via the Web. Ranking systems help to engender more competition into the game, and there are numerous categories for success as well as an overall 'score' and the prestige of being either a city mayor or planetary president.

All in all, *Starpeace* is an excellent business simulation with a lot of hidden depth and subtly addictive gameplay. We found the beta to be a bit too 'friendly' and we expect a much more competitive atmosphere with more gamers online. The few game worlds that are operating at the moment do suffer from periods of excessive latency – although, to be fair, they are not running on the final servers as yet, nor with full bandwidth.

Even so, *Starpeace* is a fun game to play and while it didn't immediately appeal to us it certainly didn't take long before we started to enjoy it. *SimCity* and *Corporation* fans should flock to *Starpeace*, but it is also a game that will appeal to gamers from other genres. With businesses ranging from ore production to toy retail stores (every area of business is catered for in depth), if you fancy a change of pace and a complete absence of camping then take a good look at *Starpeace* – it might surprise you as much as it did us. **PC**

THE CITY OF FALLEN ANGELS

Organised crime is coming to *Starpeace*

Already planning for the future, Oceanus is working on a great add-on to the *Starpeace* galaxy, one where the player can elect to build up their business on the shady side of the street, using real-life villains as basis material for certain aspects of the game. Players can choose to operate in the murky worlds of extortion and vice, or run the future version of the Pinkertons or X-men.

The fun doesn't stop here, though. Tied in with the rest of the game the producers foresee organised crime units attacking the wealthiest of companies and perverting the course of elections. The player's criminal identity will be hidden underneath a mask of a normal business account and if the computer-controlled crime team is corrupt, nobody will be able to discover who the boss really is.

Fighting the criminal classes will be ultra-secretive good guys operating in similar ways. Hiring themselves out as both bounty hunters and counter-espionage agents the detectives will be on a constant hunt for clues as to who is behind the murders, extortion, or whatever.

This aspect alone is a fantastic idea that will sit brilliantly in the sometimes mundane business world of *Starpeace*. We can't wait to try it out.



REVIEWS



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE GOLD EDITION V1.06

★ Free Download (available on this month's cover CD) • Full version of *Soldier Of Fortune* required

Tony Lamb goes to the slaughter

When released a few months ago, *Soldier Of Fortune* earned itself something of a mixed reception. Having read somewhere that gore was good, and knowing full well that you can't have too much of a good thing, the developers at Ravensoft set out to create the most realistic first-person shooter to date.

What they came up with, however, wasn't particularly true to life in terms of looks – the venerable *Quake II* engine just isn't that good – but it was teeth-clenchingly gruesome in the way that limbs separated from bodies, blood splattered in all directions and the wounded moaned in agony as their lives seeped away before our eyes. It was all good

FORTUNE COOKIES

The bulk of the update is taken up by no less than 18 new multiplayer maps, which cover the two new Deathmatch modes – Control and Conquer The Bunker. These can also be played in the already familiar DM styles too, adding a lot more variety to the game. The experience is further improved by the addition of six new player skins and even the presently unfashionable single-player mode is treated to enhanced bot AI, which makes crippling the enemy before killing them even more satisfying. There's a plethora of other tweaks too, from simple bug fixes to gameplay niceties that just add to the fun. The time taken to start levels can be a bit slow, but this isn't really a problem – we're just used to being spoilt by other games.

“At 26.5Mb the patch is relatively small and the self-extracting .zip file worked a treat”

unwholesome fun, and not surprisingly many FPS fans lapped it up. We gave it a very respectable 80 per cent and then hurried down to church to pray it hadn't tainted our mortal souls.

Ravensoft has now unveiled the Gold Edition patch, and for UK fans of the game who won't be treated to the special boxed edition it's a must. The team has been beaver away and has come up with a worthwhile update. It hasn't quite dragged the gore levels up to those of an abattoir, but no doubt hundreds of inbred gung-ho firearm maniacs in the US will be inspired by it before they nip out for a spot of animal molesting. It's not that you have to be a twisted sicko to like this game, but it certainly helps.

Downloading and installation was easy. At 26.5Mb the patch is relatively small and the self-extracting .zip file worked a treat. Just make sure you get the unzip destination right and allow about 100Mb of free disk space for the process to run in. It's as simple as that.

PCZVERDICT

- ① **UPPERS** Loads of new maps • More multiplayer options
- ② **DOWNERS** It's still sick • Limited online support • Slow to start levels

77 If you've got the game, you'll want the patch



Maps have a definite *Quake* feel to them – gloomy, enclosed and full of atmosphere.



Girls, guns and action... all in one game.



Agility keeps this flag-stealing character alive.



Great detail extends even to the flags.



Babes in latex – it has to be a winner.



SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION V1.6.6.0

★ £34.99 (extras also available as a free download from <http://swat.sierra.com> – 50Mb • Full version of SWAT 3 required) • Out now

SWAT 3 has long been a game for the lonely. Richie Shoemaker asks whether it's an event worth bringing your friends along to

It was Canadian prog' rock trio Rush who first sang "You don't get something for nothing. You can't get freedom for free. You won't get wise with the sleep still in your eyes no matter what your dreams

games journalist. The *Elite Edition* upgrade for last year's *SWAT 3* is the latest freebie to come our way and, being predominantly aimed at the multiplayer and riding on the success of *Counter-Strike*, a timely one it is too.

"If we put CS and SWAT 3 in a hostage situation and gave each a weapon, CS wouldn't win on technicalities, but on artistic impression"

might be." I know analysing Rush lyrics is sad, but these were wise words at the time, especially if you were off your box on acid, but little did they realise 25 years on those words would come back to haunt them. As many of us who use the Internet will attest, you do get a lot for nothing and with little or no effort – particularly if you're a

ONLINE ADDICTION

After spending the last six months, every lunch hour and countless days playing *Counter-Strike*, we can't help but compare *SWAT 3*'s multiplayer add-on against it. And if we'd have put both games in a hostage situation and given each a

weapon, *Counter-Strike* wouldn't win on technicalities, but it would on artistic impression.

Being very much a simulation, *SWAT 3* among human players is a far less forgiving game than *Counter-Strike* or even *Rogue Spear*. For one thing, only a handful of players can partake, which means the mistakes of those less indoctrinated into the ways of counter-terrorism are amplified tenfold. As a team vs team game, set across

tense, tight maps, to the beginner it feels more like a harsh training session, with every wrong step having terminal consequences.

It certainly isn't a fast-paced game. Sneaking around is the order of the day, and if you felt *Counter-Strike* was a little slow, you'd probably wake up in a pool of blood, head caved in across the spacebar, after playing a few rounds of *SWAT 3* online.

SWAT 3 really comes into its own as a cooperative game. Each of the original missions, plus a few new ones (available for free download) can each be played with humans against AI-bot terrorists – and, when you play with people that you know, the game is tense and gratifying in the extreme. Just as with real life and heavily armed police squads, it's the teams who know each other

that survive to fight another day.

SWAT 3 also scores highly in its ability to communicate with other players. We always found even in single-player games *SWAT 3*'s command system worked better than most, and in multiplayer games the system has been transferred with great success and will do very nicely until real-time voice chat becomes standard. **PC**

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Fantastic cooperative game

- Intuitive team command system •
- Five new maps and countless new weapon configurations

DOWNERS Best played among friends • A bit slow, even by CS standards

84 It doesn't get more real than this

Although not as much fun as *Counter-Strike*, *SWAT 3* is far more realistic.



"I said salty popcorn, you incompetent bastard!"



Great graphics but the characters, bizarrely, seem to glide across the floor rather than walk.



Bots will take up the spaces humans won't fill.



The LA Conference Center, home of E3 – we've been there.



Scarily real. If you were here, your head would be graffitied.

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BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN

★ £34.99 • Black Isle/Interplay • Out now

This brilliant AD&D-based RPG has to be one of the best PC adventure games for a long time. The more you play it, the better it becomes, but it has to be said that the multiplayer side is a bit of a let down.

You can play the multiplayer over a network, via Mplayer (which we've never liked) or direct connection to another PC, but the game is identical to the single-player game. The only difference is that from two to six players can take part, each controlling one or more of the six character slots. Players can drop in and out of games at any time, which is handy and if you get a good bunch of six players, real-time combat is considerably easier than in the single-player version where you need to keep pausing to change spells and strategies.

The main problem is that even if you're already halfway through the single-player game yourself, or you've finished it, you'll still have to start a multiplayer game right at the beginning. And you can't import your characters into a multiplayer game at their existing level – it's back to square one. No +3 swords for you, pal.

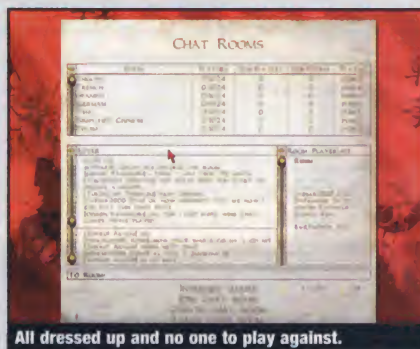
All players have to have a full copy of the game and the configured frame rates also have to be identical, so you could find yourself unable to connect if you have an under-powered PC. The host plays the lead character and has plenty of options as to who should be allowed to do what. But, in the end, you really need to find like-minded players who'll pull together. Online games can be spoiled by kamikaze tactics or the morons who just want to kill everyone else for the lack of having anything better to do.

Frankly, it's probably best played on a network with people you know and who are prepared to dedicate themselves to the 200-300 hours it'll take to finish.

Andrew Wright



Cheating is still a massive problem with *Shogun's* online leagues.



All dressed up and no one to play against.



Before you know it it's all over.

VERDICT

76%



Life is tough on other astral planes...



Online or network play is OK – just don't expect too much.

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR V1.12

★ £29.99 • Creative Assembly/EA • Out now • V1.12 patch available from www.totalwar.com

Shogun: Total War is one of the best games we've ever played. Yet, for all its glory upon release, it was always haunted by poor performances in its online multiplayer side. Months after it blazed a trail across the gaming world, we took the opportunity to revisit *Shogun* and try out the latest patch (1.12) to see what had changed.

First impressions were favourable – the atrocious chat and games screens are now improved with the ability to sort games and players. But, despite this, they're still cramped into an obscenely small area of the screen mainly taken up by superfluous background graphics. The end result is still a cramped window, but now with more going on in it.

After finally finding someone willing to stop throwing around accusations of cheating for their League position and play a game, we progressed smoothly and quickly through the selection screens and into the load sequence – again all nice and smooth. Once in the game, however, things deteriorated badly. To say that the game was fast, would be as accurate as saying that the Dome was a great financial success.

In three games with different players, albeit with a latency of 250-250ms, we found ourselves

competing against an enemy that literally moved like lightning. By the time we'd selected a unit and formation, a veritable horde was in among our ranks slaughtering us wholesale.

It would have been a glorious sight even then, except that the my 'lowly' Voodoo 3 was only putting out about one frame-per-second at this point and I simply missed most of the action. There was some smoke; a lot of people running away and the game was over. Fantastic.

Shogun has always behaved like a pig on a hot summer's day in its online format – and, despite the best efforts of EA and developers Creative Assembly, they just can't seem to improve the performance to a good enough standard. Perhaps that is why there are so many empty chat rooms and so few players.

As to the leagues, well, accusations of cheating are still rife and bugs and multiplayer cheats are apparently rampant. For us this isn't really a concern, as the game is not worth playing in its current state in any case. A bit harsh? Maybe, but unless you've got ADSL and a ninja PC don't bother competing. But don't let that put you off buying it, as a single-player game *Shogun* is one of this year's best.

Jed Norton

VERDICT

42%

COUNTER-STRIKE BOTS

Fancy a blast with 15 other players but don't want a sky-high ping and your mum asking to use the phone line every two minutes? *Phil Wand* has the answer

Multiplayer shooters need large numbers of players to make them work. If you've played online, you'll know how five-player *Counter-Strike* games quickly become four-player games, then three- and two-player, with the last protagonist dropping out soon after to leave you wandering around levels on your Jack Jones.

Even when games are packed out, sometimes you'll be playing like shit and getting hacked off with the way enemy bullets cleave your skull each time you take a step forward. Often it's the other way around, with everyone else so tremendously awful that you simply can't bear to be on the same server as them ("How do I plant the bomb?" "Where do I take the hostages?").

Bots could be the answer. They're computer-controlled players that act as your teammates or your opponents. If you're playing a small network game with your friends, they can help make up numbers. Eighteen months ago they were just appearing for vanilla *Half-Life* and were universally rudimentary; today they're capable of challenging you at your favourite mod and at varying levels of skill.

REVIEWS

NNBOT V0.9

According to NNBot's author, he has written "neural network artificial intelligence" into his core code. Although it sounds like bollocks, he's probably telling the truth – we reckon this is the best out bar none. The computer controlled both our team-mates and our opponents with such bewildering realism that we had to keep reminding ourselves we weren't on our dial-ups. They jump, duck, crouch, stalk, give cover, run for cover, plant and defuse bombs, rescue hostages and – perhaps sadly – gave us more of a game than we usually get by going online. Get this *now*.

Where: nnbot.counter-strike.dk

Size: 295Kb

Pros: Smarter than many real players • Learns to react to certain situations

Cons: A little too accurate • Can't add new bots once the server is running

Score: ★★★★★

OUR
CHOICE

ANDROID V2.1 ALPHA

Had this been released six months ago, it would have been the hot thing to have. When you start a *Counter-Strike* game with Androids in it, you can hear them buy stuff and then dash off in seemingly random directions to find some action. However, after a little duelling with them you begin to realise they're actually pretty daft. They ping-pong between preset waypoints paying scant regard for teammates or team goals. Unlike NNBot, they can't plant bombs or rescue hostages, and they won't deviate from their course if shot at (or pursue you if you shoot at them). This is only early code release, though, and the author is upbeat about new features and honest about the current version's poor level of intelligence.

Where: bot.counter-strike.net/android

Size: 162Kb

Pros: Puts up a good fight • Will purchase guns and ammo

Cons: Wordy documentation • Primitive • Only works on three maps

Score: ★★★★★

REALBOT V2.02 ALPHA

Before the arrival of NNBot, RealBot used to be the daddy. Capable of purchasing primary and secondary weapons and ammunition, throwing grenades and planting bombs, they provided a more than adequate challenge for *Counter-Strike* players with red telephone bills. Playing them makes you realise that the code has been in development for some time: they're accurate but not *too* accurate. They were the first to do things like throw grenades and plant bombs. And they're easy to install and include in your games. However, they now stand in the shadow of the mighty NNBot. Scrutinise their behaviour and you'll soon see where the code is lacking. They don't crouch and cover positions. They can't defuse planted bombs. Most importantly they get 'stuck' wagging around in circles.

Where: bot.counter-strike.net/realbot

Size: 92Kb

Pros: A worthy opponent • Does most things you do

Cons: Can't defuse bombs • Easily confused by some maps

Score: ★★★★★



If you shoot a teammate bot in the head, it won't retaliate in the next round. You won't win much, though.



Where the hell is he going?



Good strategic position. Not.

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TOP 10 NEW RELEASES

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TOP 10 BUDGET GAMES

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GADGETS

An intriguing round-up of all the latest hardware, good and bad, together with five of the best new movie releases on DVD...

PC-DVD 12X INFRA

★ Creative Labs • £169 • 01245 265 265 • www.creative.com

You see the five rather splendid DVDs at the foot of this page? If you fit a DVD ROM drive to your PC and hook up your PC to your TV, you can watch all these with a crystal-clear picture, uncannily clear pause facility and all manner of other technological wizardry.

You probably don't need convincing about the merits of DVD itself. What you should know, though, is that this latest release from Creative comes with its very latest technology, including the 12x DVD ROM drive itself, the Dxr3 card that enables you to link up to your TV and a decoder for surround-sound niceties, and a handy credit-card-sized remote control. This means that you can pretend you've got a sleek black DVD player in your lounge, and control goings-on without leaving the comfort of your armchair. As long as your PC isn't prehistoric, the picture quality is absolutely fine. And if you're looking to upgrade your CD drive, this is definitely the way to do it. ★★★★★

A stalker's dream: keeps your life on track, and aids voyeuristic activities.



PALM IIIc

★ £249.99 • Palm • 02073659820 • www.palm.com

As you'd expect from a company with so much experience producing PDAs, Palm IIIc is a superbly well-balanced product, introducing a host of new features. The main improvement on previous incarnations, and on practically every other PDA on the market, is the crystal-clear display, now capable of showing colour. Getting used to how the symbols you write on to the display turn into actual words takes a while, but there are enough applications to make the effort worthwhile. As is the case with every new gadget, you get more in a smaller package, such as the 8Mb of

memory, which will come in useful keeping up with all those addresses and phone numbers of friends. Because they are your friends, aren't they? You're not some kind of weird stalking, voyeuristic weirdo who follows people around, writes down where they live and peeps through their bathroom windows, are you? Because if you are, this PDA will come in very useful. The internal rechargeable battery means you've got hours of use before you need to return to your lair – and its sleek design means it fits snugly into a raincoat. ★★★★★



★ Fit this DVD-ROM drive into your PC and plug it straight into your TV for a crystal-clear DVD picture quality.

DVDS

THIS IS SPINAL TAP – SPECIAL EDITION

★ £17.99 • Certificate 15 • MGM

Parodying the farcical world of the music business has been done a good few times over the years, but nothing has ever come close to the film that started the whole thing off. Directed by Rob Reiner, the film charts the downfall of heavy rockers Spinal Tap as they tour America and along the way, whether you've seen the film before, you are treated to some of the funniest set pieces ever committed to celluloid. The songs Big Bottom and Sex Farm, Nigel Tufnel's piano trilogy and their 'none more black' album cover are just a few of the highlights. There are many more and, unlike more recent comedies such as *American Pie* and *Something About Mary*, *Spinal Tap* is a film that requires repeat viewing. It's a film that goes one higher than most others and is without doubt one of the funniest ever made.

EXTRA FEATURES

Audio commentary • One hour of outtakes • Music videos • Trailers and TV commercials • Marti Di Bergi (Rob Reiner) interview

★★★★★



DVD
OF THE MONTH

MAN BITES DOG

★ £19.99 • Certificate 18 • Tartan Video

Spoof documentary and deeply dark comedy following in the footsteps of mass murderer and poet Benoit. It quickly gained a cult following in this country and did quite well at the Cannes Film Festival, but that still doesn't prepare you for some of the grisly sights. Genuinely disturbing, especially the way the film juxtaposes humour and violence, which can leave you watching with a tangible sense of guilt. This one is definitely not for the fainthearted, but a recommended watch for anybody with guts.

EXTRA FEATURES Previously unreleased short from the directors • Stills gallery • Film review

★★★★★



MOUSE PHONE

★ £19.99 • Innovations •
0870 907 0870 •
www.innovations.co.uk

Do not adjust your set, you read it right. And, as the box so proudly proclaims (just in case you were still wondering), this is a mouse that's also a phone. Which begs a couple of questions, such as why, or indeed who would want such a contraption?

Plugging into your PC and a spare phone socket, the Mouse Phone also comes with a headpiece and the whole caboodle enables you to dial, speak and sweep your cursor at the same time. Back in the real world, you'll find that this is one of those ideas that should never have got past the planning stage. Only the seriously mentally impaired would actually conceive that something this ridiculous would actually make a viable purchase.

It doesn't even work as a lo-tech

As far as bad ideas go, this is superfluous technology at its worst.

communication aid for games like *Counter-Strike*, or as a way of carrying on playing when someone makes the mistake of phoning you during a frenetic session because the mouse (and the phone for that matter) is absolutely rubbish. Laughably inept, this is probably the worst inclusion in the Innovations extensive range. And that's really saying something. ★★★★★

USB HUB

★ £24.99 • Saitek • 01454 855050 • www.saitek.com

One of the most annoying aspects of being a serious PC games player is the amount of peripherals we have to link up to the back of our PCs. And with USB devices becoming ever more common, many of us seem to be spending more time plugging and unplugging devices than we do playing the games that use them.

Saitek's little black box, however, is on the rescue path and, with four USB ports, the device snakes comfortably within reaching distance. This means that you can have the latest gamepad, joystick and steering wheel hooked up at once without constantly having to crawl on all fours to switch devices. Although it's fairly expensive, it is built to the highest quality. We swung the thing around our heads and flung it against a steel cupboard and it still worked. This baby will probably outlive your PC.

Bringing plug-and-play to your PC is just one of the benefits of USB technology – and although the new connection doesn't solve all your problems, especially if you try and run a lot of fast components simultaneously, it's still a godsend. And, for gamers who have everything and nowhere to plug it all, Saitek's neat box should be next on your most wanted list. ★★★★★

One little black box you won't want to go without.

TRUST SIGHT FIGHTER WIRELESS

★ £29.99 • Insight • 0870 7007350 • www.trust.com

Ask yourself what you most hate about playing games, and second to losing, most of you are going to be shouting about the curse of wires. Once you've attached a couple of gamepads, the latest surround-sound speakers, a 56K modem, mouse and keyboard, your actual desktop can look as bad as the insides of your local BT box.

Wireless components are the way of the future, and Trust is on the bandwagon with its Sight Fighter gamepad. The remote connects to a standard gamepad or a USB port (although we couldn't actually get it to go through USB) and enables you to stand up to about 10 metres away while still playing your game.

This isn't actually the point – you're never going to be more than a metre or two away from your desk anyway. It does help keep mess down to a minimum, but the actual functionality of the pad is all-important and this is where the Sight Fighter falls down.

As an inspiration for design, the SideWinder is far

more comfortable and responsive. By comparison, this feels awkward and the button placement is strange to say the least. Certainly not bad, but we wouldn't recommend ditching your existing ones.

★★★★★

② The future is bright. The future is wireless. Now is the time to rid your life of messy affairs.

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

★ £15.99 • Certificate 18 • Warner Home Video

Stanley Kubrick withdrew this film himself after sensationalistic tabloid pieces tried to lay the blame at his doorstep for the escalating gang violence in England. Thankfully, it's now back in circulation, although Kubrick himself is now dead. And with human rights issues taking on a greater prevalence today, the film's message is probably more potent and significant now than ever before. It's not exactly the sort of stuff you'd get your granny to watch with you, but this isn't an exploitative flick, and the disturbing mix of images, classical music and droog-speak work on a very odd level. A class performance from Malcolm McDowell eclipses everything he's done since. The only gripe is the lack of extras.

EXTRA FEATURES A theatrical trailer
★★★★★

GET CARTER BOX SET

★ £24.99 • Certificate 18 • Warner Home Video

Often offered as the British equivalent (and sometimes the original and superior) of the great American gangster films of the '70s, *Get Carter* is actually closer in plot and tone to the 1920's hard-boiled thrillers of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. And while its image is usually linked with Caine's viciously cool character, the film has as much visual panache as an episode of *Minder*. But, although it's an irregular picture – at times slow and depressing, at times brilliant and hypnotic – there's no denying its power, especially in the brutal last half-hour. And it does have Caine telling another character that he has eyes "like piss holes in the snow". Now is the perfect time to watch it again, before the fetid Stallone remake hits the big screen.

EXTRA FEATURES Three trailers

• Cast and director commentary • Screenplay • Exclusive postcards
★★★★★

CHINATOWN

★ £19.99 • Certificate 18 • Paramount

Hollywood's attempt to recapture the glorious darkness and violent complexity of film noirs, such as *Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep*, produced a true masterpiece. A young Jack Nicholson gives the most restrained performance of his career as the sleazy private eye investigating an affair and uncovering the political corruption and moral decadence of pre-war Southern California, while the film slowly reworks every noir theme imaginable with plenty of style. Despite garnering 11 Oscar nominations and unqualified critical praise, *Chinatown* doesn't often get the credit it deserves. It's almost traditional to find Roman Polanski's finest film as a simple footnote to the more celebrated Scorsese and De Palma classics. Tortuous, intelligent and sordid but, above all, a great movie.

EXTRA FEATURES Trailer •

Interviews with director Polanski, writer Robert Towne and producer Robert Evans
★★★★★

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MSR
METROPOLIS STREET RACER



Dreamcast

SEGA

WHAT'S THE POINT?

★ DUMBING DOWN Martin Korda



Hello. Hello? Helloooooo??? Is anybody out there actually reading this? Hey you, yes you, I'm talking to you. Bloody hell,

thank God I've managed to get your attention. Look, I know things round here in the land of Troubleshooter aren't always that exciting (unless you get off on lines like turn left, go forward, open door, pick up strangely shaped fork), but let's see if we can't turn things around just a little.

For starters, I've decided to run a Stupid Competition. All you have to do to enter is send me the most pointless and humorous cheats ever devised. The more stupid your cheat, the more likely you are to win. So if you've got a code which can turn an action\adventure hero into a spoon or a division of tanks into a group of Morris dancers, we want to know about it. And your prize? Well, what could be more fitting for the most stupid cheat than the most ridiculous prize we can find in the office, and believe me, we've got some corkers.

Anyhow, the rules are on the other page... right, right a bit more... no, too far.. back a bit. There you go.... We'll announce the first winner next month.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

138 CHEAT MASTER

The cheater's cheat, Mr Keith Pullin bares his soul and reveals some sneaky little manoeuvres.

139 DEAR KEITH

Filled with agony and gaming woes? Uncle Keith is here to help.

140 DIABLO II WALKTHROUGH PART 1

Keith Pullin takes you by the hand and leads you through the first half of this popular RPG sequel.

144 STAR TREK: VOYAGER ELITE FORCE

Lock and load and shoot some Borg, as James Lyon shows you the way round Activision's fantastic FPS.

148 DEAR WANDY

Need to find a solution to a niggling technical pain? Our resident techie Wandy is here to help.

150 WATCHDOG

Have you got a gripe with the industry? Then allow the consumers' champion Adam Phillips to find out some answers...

YOUR HOSTS



Adam Phillips



Keith Pullin



James Lyon

CHEAT MASTER

It never hurts to get expert help, so stop here for your cheat licence

★ CHIEF CHEAT Keith Pullin

ON THE CD



ON THE CD

More cheats, tips and solutions on the cover CD this month. Find out what's in store by looking at the Editorial section of your CD-ROM browser.

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/Cheat Master, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczon@denis.co.uk with Dear Keith or Cheat Master in the subject line.

METAL GEAR SOLID

Microsoft

Add '-cheatenable' into the command line of the game (mgsl.exe -cheatenable) and press the following function keys:

- F2 God mode
- F4 Unlimited ammo
- F6 Look mode
- F5 Standard mode
- F7 Quick level restart

If that's not enough for you, try some of these extra bits:

- Complete the game without giving up to Ocelot in the torture game and there will be a new save game. Load it up and you will have a bandana in your inventory. Wear it and you should get infinite ammo.
- Complete the game after giving up to

Ocelot in the torture game, and again, there's another save game that appears. Load this one up and you will start out with a stealth camouflage.

• Complete the game twice to get the bandana and stealth camouflage. During the third time round, get to the area where you fight the Ninja without using either of those two items. If you can do this properly the Ninja wears a lovely little red outfit instead of his standard blue number. Carry on to complete the game and you will get a new musical track during the ending.

CARMAGEDDON: TDR 2000

SCI

Hit '[tilde]' and type any of the following cheat codes:

- herecomestrouble Enable cheats
- openlevelsguv Access all levels
- cash Extra \$10,000
- invincible God mode
- enablebuy Buy any car
- wasteall Waste all cars
- adventure Text-only
- adventure sub-game (see below for commands)
- ai on/off AI on/off
- setcar [CARNAME] Change your car to [CARNAME]
- makeai [CARNAME] Create opponent as [CARNAME]
- lastlap Start on final lap
- lastcheckpoint Only last checkpoint to go
- addpowerup [POWERUP NAME] Add power-up

breakCar [CARNAME] Damage car [CARNAME]
peds on/off Pedestrians on/off

- Look in your Assets folder and load a file called PowerupStrings_Internal.txt to find all the names of powerups.
- To get rid of the timer, go into the options.txt file in the Assets folder and look for the line USE_TIMER. When you find it, change the value from 1 to 0.
- The commands for the text adventure are as follows:

- go (direction) Move in that direction
- kill (zombie's name) Attack the zombie
- look (name of person or object) Describes person or object
- look Tells you who or what is near and where you can go
- look again Instant replay
- inventory Tells you what you are carrying
- get (item name) Get item
- quit Exits adventure

F1 2000

EA Sports

If you're having speed trouble, then these two cheats should help. First off, to double your speed, make a profile with the name Damon Hill. Next up, in the game menu type 'Hakkinen is the best' for a super-turbo car. Interestingly, you can type in different drivers for different effects. Try it and see...

☎ Problems with F1 2000? Not any more you haven't.



STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So, you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheatmaster, do you? Well here's your chance to prove it. For the next few months (and even longer if you're lucky) we're going to be running a Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most ridiculous and pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you

the most ridiculous prize we can find in the PC ZONE prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address to letters@pczone.co.uk. Entitle your emails Stupid Compo and make sure all your details are present, so if you do win, we know where to send your prize.



CRIMSON SKIES

Microsoft

Want to play any mission the game has to offer? Well, now's your chance. All you have to do is go into the campaign menu and right-click the microphone on the left side of the screen. Now type 'Idaho'. A menu should appear in the top-right of the screen. From



Up, up and away.

here you can access whatever mission you like. We're just too good to you...

SYDNEY 2000

Eidos

Type 'gizmo' on the title screen to activate the cheat code. With this you can take part in any event instantly.

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

So here it is: the moment you've all been waiting for – the cheat mode for the latest Borg-bashing bonanza. First you need to bring up the console by pressing ~ while playing. Then type 'sv_cheats 1' in the console to activate cheat mode,

and finally just go potty with any of the codes below:

god	God mode
noclip	No clipping
undying	999 armour and 999 health
cg_thirdperson 1	Third-person perspective
notarget	Invisible
map #	Load map # (see below)
give #	Give item # (see below)
Map Names	
BORG1	The Rescue
BORG2	Incursion
HOLODECK	Tactical Decision
VOY1	Condition
VOY2	Unavoidable Delays
VOY3	Hazard Duty
VOY4	Defense
VOY5	Hazard Ops
STASIS1	Data Retrieval
STASIS2	Deep Echoes
STASIS3	Encounters

VOY6	Renewal
VOY7	Union
VOY8	Departure
SCAV1	The Visit
SCAV2	Dangerous Ground
SCAV3	Conflicting Views
SCAV3b	Conflicting Views (pt 2)
SCAV4	Disorder
SCAV5	Infiltration
SCAVBOSS	The Hunter
VOY9	Fallout
BORG3	Proving Ground
BORG4	Information
BORG5	Covenant
BORG6	Infestation
VOY13	R and R
VOY14	Visual Confirmation
VOY15	Offense
DN1	The Breach
DN2	Command
DN3	Primary Encounter
DN4	The Skirmish
DN5	Defensive Measures
TRAIN	Transit
DN6	Attunement
DN8	Array
VOY16	Invasion
VOY17	Decisions
FORGE1	External Stimuli
FORGE2	Matrix
FORGE3	Onslaught
FORGE4	Visual Magnitude
FORGE5	Dissolution
FORGEBOSS	Command Decision
VOY20	Epilogue
Item Names	
Phaser	Tetryon Disruptor
Tricorder	Stasis Weapon
Health	Grenade Launcher
Ammo	Compression Rifle
Weapons	Photon Burst

PHONE FOR HELP

Having trouble with a game and can't wait to see a reply in these pages? Then you need to check out...

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All IMOD (infinity modulator)
Armour Dreadnought Weapon

ENEMY ENGAGED: COMANCHE VS KA-52 HOKUM

Empire Interactive

Need a god mode? Don't blame you. In the `autoexec.bat` file, enter the line `'set comanche_hokum set UIT:600000000000'` to do the trick. [X]

DEAR KEITH

When your sweaty little joystick can't take it any more, Keith Pullin knows the score

SOLID GONE

Q How the hell do I kill that bloody ninja thing on the laboratory stage of *Metal Gear Solid*? Talk about rock hard. It takes about 30 seconds for him to completely rip me to pieces with his blades. I've just about had enough. Please give me some kind of fail-safe formula or the game's going in the bin.

Leslie Orton, Bucks

A Dear oh dear, some people really get wound up too easily. Sure, he's a hard boss to beat, but there's no use crying about it. All you have to do is use chaff to freeze him and then attack with your hands. If you use any kind of weapon, you'll only succeed in upsetting him further, so remember: this is a hand-to-hand battle and nothing else.

SHORT VOYAGER

Q I have been playing your demo of *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force* and I've reached a room where an injured

crew member beams back to the ship when you talk to him. There's also an explosion in that room that stops you getting to the opposite door, so now I'm completely stuck. Is there a way out, or is that the end of the demo?

Alan Barnes, Oldham

A OK – look around the room. Can you see the glowing platforms moving up and down the wall? Good. Jump on one of those to reach the walkway above you, walk along it, and then take another platform down to get to the door on the other side of the room. End of the demo? Really...

KING OF THE SWINGERS

Q You must know the answer to this one: how can I get better tee shots on *PGA Championship Golf 2000*? I'm using the 'trueswing' method, but every time I hit the ball it either rolls along the floor or swings wildly to the left or right. I've never experienced such a

ridiculous way of playing a golf game. If you can't put me straight on this one, I'll have to go back to the old tri-click method.

Paul Hill, Exeter

A Nah, you don't want to do that. To get the perfect tee shot using the trueswing system, follow this method. First, get yourself a CD case, put it on a solid base to run the mouse along as you take your shot. By doing this you should be able to get long, straight shots virtually every time. You can try this on fairway shots as well – it seems to work for me.

WITCH WEAPON?

Q I bought myself the *Blair Witch* game and am currently struggling through the forest section. I've located Rustin Parr's house, Coffin Rock and that weird old Indian bloke, but now I've found this enormous scorpion-type creature that's blocking my way back into town. Despite pumping all the bullets from my rifle and



handgun into it, it still keeps tearing my head off. Just what on earth do I have to do? It's really starting to ruin my enjoyment now. Can you help?

Andy Trout, Fulham

A Of course I can help. The main problem you've got here is that you've forgotten that this creature is supernatural, so normal guns won't work. Try using the big particle projection cannon weapon instead. Admittedly at first it doesn't look like you're doing any damage, but after about ten hits the scorpion should die and you can get back into town.



DIABLO II

STRATEGY GUIDE & WALKTHROUGH PART ONE

Every time *Keith Pullin* played *Diablo II* he was consumed by a strange desire to poke our eyes out with a javelin. Thank goodness he's finally completed it

★ REVIEWED PCZ #93 SCORE 72%



This month we offer a walkthrough for the first two acts of the game, as well as a wealth of information on the types of monsters you'll face during those initial levels. We've also included a recipe list for the Horadric Cube.

Hopefully that should keep you busy until next month. If it doesn't — tough; it's all you're getting for now...

ACT I: THE SIGHTLESS EYE

In the Rogues' Camp make use of the following characters:

Akara Heals health and mana. Also sells magic paraphernalia.

Charsi Trades and repairs weapons.

Deckard Cain Identifies items for free once you've rescued him.

Gheed Bit of an all-round trader, but don't fall for his gambling ruse.

Kasha Hires out warriors for 150-490 gold pieces after you have completed quest two.

Warriv The caravan driver gives you a ride east once you've completed Act 1.

Quest 1: Den Of Evil

To receive your first quest, talk to Akara. Go to the cave on Blood Moor and kill every monster in there, including the unique zombie called Corpse Fire.

Providing you have plenty of potions he won't be a problem. When the sun lights up the cave, return to Akara in the camp.



Ⓢ The first boss in the game is simple; a poke in the face with a sharp weapon should do the trick.

Quest 2: Sisters' Burial Grounds

Talk to Kasha to find out about his quest. To reach the Monastery



"Nice doggy."

Graveyard you need to go through the Cold Plains. Some of the monsters can be quite nasty in that area, so again, top up on health potions.

When you reach the cemetery on the far side of the Cold Plains, kill the undead zombies and stuff wandering around near the perimeter first. Once you've thinned them out a bit, head towards Blood Raven in the centre. Barbarians and Paladins can go straight for the jugular and take her on face-to-face by pinning her in a corner. Other characters can only really beat her by using long-range attacks while avoiding her flaming arrows.

When she's dead you have two choices: you can go back to camp for the next quest, or you can venture into the Crypt and Mausoleum to gain some extra experience and treasure. The latter is recommended.



⚡ Keep away from Blood Raven's minions and attack from a distance.

Quest 3: The Cairn Stones

Talk to Akara for this difficult quest. Go into the Cold Plains and go all the way through to the

entrance of Stony Field; in the Stony Field there is a passageway to the Dark Wood; in Dark Wood go right to the Tree of Infuss. Kill Treehead Woodfist and then left-click on the tree to get the scroll. Head all the way back to Akara for a translation.

With the translation complete go back to the Cairn Stones in the Stony Field and kill Rakanishu who guards them. Touch the stones in the order shown on the scroll and you are teleported to Tristram. Head for Griswold and kill him with a ranged weapon. Release Deckard Cain from his cage, and then return to camp.



⚡ The portal that opens in the middle of these stones is your ticket to Cain.

Quest 4: The Forgotten Tower

To activate this quest, touch the mouldy tome in the Stony Field. When you've done that go through the Dark Wood to the Black Marsh and find a ruined tower. In here there are five levels of pretty intense fighting. There is also at least one random unique monster or group of champions on each level. It's

not easy, but on the plus side there's loads of treasure.

On the bottom dungeon you find the Countess and her minions. She's a fiery character to say the least, so make sure you're equipped with some kind of item that offers good fire protection. After you've killed her little entourage, attack her one-to-one. When she's dead collect all the gold and go back to the camp to talk to Charsi.



⚡ This unique monster attempts to stop you from entering the tower.



⚡ Once inside the tower, try and avoid these ugly red abominations.

Quest 5: Tools Of The Trade

Charsi has managed to lose her hammer in a nearby Monastery. Walk from the Dark Wood, to the

SHRINE ON YOU CRAZY DIAMOND

In times of dire need, a shrine can come in very handy indeed. Here's a quick reminder of what each of them does:

Armour	Doubles armour rating
Combat	Increases your attack rating and maximum damage by 200 per cent
Experience	50 per cent more experience per kill
Exploding	Releases about ten exploding potions
Fire	Emits fireballs damaging all nearby creatures (including you)
Gem	Upgrades any gem you have, or drops random gem if you don't have one
Health	Replenishes health
Mana	Replenishes mana
Mana Recharge	Mana rejuvenates 50 per cent faster
Monster	Nearest enemy turns into a unique monster
Poison	Emits gas cloud and 5-10 poison potions
Recharge	Mana rejuvenates 400 per cent faster
Resist Cold	Increases cold resistance by 75 per cent
Resist Fire	Increases fire resistance by 75 per cent
Resist Lightning	Increases lightning resistance by 75 per cent
Resist Poison	Increases poison resistance by 75 per cent
Refill	Replenishes health and mana
Skill	+Two levels to every skill learned
Stamina	Unlimited stamina while active



There are 19 different shrines, some are not as helpful as others.



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WHO'S A PRETTY BOY THEN?

There are three different kinds of monsters roaming the lands (not including bosses). Here's what you can expect from them:

Basic Creatures

Most monsters roam in packs and release a small amount of gold, and perhaps some kind of basic item when you kill them. These enemies are known as minions and are there to serve either a Champion or a Unique creature.



Champion Creatures

Much tougher versions of basic monsters, and worth more experience points when killed. They hang around in groups of three or four and are more likely to drop good quality items and large piles of gold. Champions randomly appear on most levels.



Unique Creatures

Unique creatures have their own names, but they still appear randomly on each level with a small pack of minions for company. They can release magical items and a hefty pile of gold when killed, so expect a tougher fight than usual.



Black Marsh, and then to the Tamoe Highlands to find the monastery on the far right of the map. Enter the Outer Cloister and be sure to activate the waypoint – you're going to need it.

After gradually heading down through Cloisters and into the jail you meet The Smith. This guy is a unique monster with immense strength. Providing you avoid his stupendous hammer blows, he's fairly easy to beat, though. Once he's worm food, collect the hammer and go back to Charsi who offers to imbue one of your items with magical powers.



① The waypoints inside the monastery come in very handy. Don't forget to activate them.

Quest 6: Sisters To The Slaughter

When the five other quests have been completed talk to Deckard Cain. Go to the Catacombs that can be found in the Monastery Barracks near where you killed The Smith. Andariel is on the fourth level of the catacombs. If you want to stand any chance of beating her, make sure you are at least level 14 before taking her on.

To defeat her use resist poison to nullify her poison attacks. On top of that you should always keep moving; run in and attack, then run away again. Repeat this over and over again until she

explodes. Return to the camp, talk to Warriv and head east...



① Andariel provides one of the toughest battles in the game – it will all end in flames you know...

ACT II: THE SECRET OF THE VIZJEREI

These are the people you rely on in Lut Gholein

Atma Pub landlady. Wants her dead family avenged.

Deckard Cain Identifies magical items.

Drogan Deals in staves, sceptres, scrolls and potions.

Elzix Buys/sells weapons and armour and offers a gambling game.

Fara Restores health and mana. Also repairs/trades weapons.

Geglash Local wino. Specialises in talking shite.

Griez You can hire level 9-17 mercenaries from him for 300-700 gold.

Jerhyn Young, despairing ruler of Lut Gholein.

Lysander Magic items and scrolls are his game.

Meshif Captain of the ship in the harbour. Offers a lift east.

Warriv Takes you back to the Rogues' Camp.

Quest 1: Radament's Lair

There are two entrances to the sewers – go through whichever

one you prefer. After forcing your way down through four levels you finally discover Radament. This can be one hell of a fight, especially if you don't dispose of his meandering minions before taking on the man himself. The battle is extra difficult due to Radament's immunity to nearly all forms of magic, so getting up close is easily the best way to dispose of him.

After you've killed him, pick up the Horadric Scroll and Book of Skill and return to Cain.



① In places like the sewer, the automap feature is priceless.

Quest 2: The Horadric Staff

Speak with Atma for the low-down on the next quest. To reach the Horadric Cube you need to go to the Dry Hills and enter The Halls of the Dead. On the third level a unique Sabre Cat must be killed to get the cube. Once you've got that, it's off to find the Horadric Shaft in the Sand Maggot Lair in the Far Oasis. Cold Worm the Devourer guards it. He relies on his hordes of squishy minions to stop you getting near, so use a ranged weapon to get rid of them all and collect the shaft.

The final part of the Horadric Shaft is on level two of the Claw Viper Temple, which can be found in the Valley of the Snakes

HORADRIC CUBE RECIPES

Open up the Horadric cube, put the items in, hit the transmute button and take out your new creation...

Three amulets = One ring

Six gems and one sword = One socketed long sword

Two quivers of arrows = One quiver of bolts

Two quivers of bolts = One quiver of arrows

One spear and one quiver of arrows = One stack of javelins

Three rings = One amulet

Three perfect skulls and one amulet = One special skills amulet

Three health potions and three mana potions = One rejuvenation potion

Three health potions, three mana potions and one gem = One full rejuvenation potion

Three gems of the same type and grade = One gem of the next higher grade

Three perfect gems and one armour or weapon = One new magical item of the same type

One axe, one dagger and a stack of throwing knives = One stack of throwing axes

One ring and two topaz gems = One coral ring with 21-30 lightning resistance

Six perfect gems (one of each type) and one amulet = Prismatic amulet

One ring, one emerald and four antidote potions = One viridian ring with 21-30 poison resistance

One ring, one ruby and four exploding potions = One garnet ring with 21-30 fire resistance

One ring, one sapphire and four thawing potions = One cobalt ring with 21-30 cold resistance

One health potion and one strangling gas potion = One antidote potion



past the Lost City. The main enemy in there is Fang Skin; a quicker version of the snakes you've already come across. Defeating this manic reptile shouldn't be difficult providing you have good armour and lots of health potions.

Finally, when you have all three parts of the Horadric thingy, go back to Cain in Lut Gholein and listen to his musings.

Quest 3: Tainted Sun

This quest is actually completed after you get the part of the Horadric Shaft that restores the sun.



Ⓜ "Ahhhhh! Get 'em off me. Get 'em orfffff."



Ⓜ Make use of the split-screen option — it can save time and even your life.

Quest 4: The Arcane Sanctuary

Talk to Drognan and enter the Palace. Things get very interesting now. Inside you need to navigate your way through two levels of Harem and three levels of the Palace Cellar to find the entrance to the Arcane Sanctuary. It's a tough fight to get through, but just take it slowly and keep topping up on potions by teleporting to town as much as possible. Destroy Fire Eye, a unique Sand Raider, and then step through into the Arcane Sanctuary to complete the quest.

Quest 5: The Summoner

Meticulously work your way along the weird and wonderful Arcane Sanctuary until you meet the Summoner. At this point it's imperative to have some kind of cold resistant item to protect you from the Summoner's deadly ice blast. To kill him try ranged weapons for pretty much everyone apart from the Barbarian; his knockback skill seems to work wonders here. When you've killed him a portal appears — step through this to reach the Canyon of the Magi.



Ⓜ The Arcane Sanctuary is home to some cunning enemies.

Quest 6: The Seven Tombs

As soon as you arrive in the canyon touch the waypoint marker in order to quickly get back here when you die — and believe us, you will die. Find the true Tomb of Tal Rasha by matching the symbols on the tomb entrances. Go down into the chamber and insert the Horadric Orifice to blow open a hole in the wall. Step into that hole to reach the demon, Duriel.

Killing Duriel is extremely difficult. Dodge his cold blasts and keep your distance as much as possible. Again, ranged attacks are the best strategy, although because he has so many hit points, it takes a hell of a long time. Providing you remain patient and get into some kind of rhythm, he eventually dies. Release the friendly(?) demon Tyrael and go through the portal.

Next up is Act III, but more on that next month... [22]



"Come on then, I'll take you on."

BOSS DIRECTORY

Here's a list of all the bosses from the first half of the game. This tells you where they can be found and what special abilities they have

NAME	LOCATION	SPECIAL
Corpsefire	Act I, The Den of Evil	Spectral Hit
Bishibosh	Act I, The Cold Plains	Magic Resistance, Fire Enchanted
Bonebreak	Act I, The Crypt	Extra Strong, Magic Resistance
Blood Raven	Act I, The Burial Grounds	Fire Arrow
Cold Crow	Act I, The Cave	Cold Enchanted
Rakanishu	Act I, The Stony Field	Lightning Enchanted, Extra Fast
Treehead Wfst	Act I, The Dark Wood	Extra Strong, Extra Fast
Griswold	Act I, Tristram	Cursed
The Countess	Act I, Forgotten Tower	Fire Enchanted
The Smith	Act I, Barracks	Extra Strong
Pitspawn Fdog	Act I, Jail Level 2	Cursed, Cold Enchanted
Flamespike	Act I, Inner Cloister	Fire Enchanted, Cursed
Bone Ash	Act I, Cathedral	Extra Strong, Cold enchant, M Resist
Andariel	Act I, Catacombs	Poison Strike, Poison Cloud
Radament	Act II, Sewers Level 3	Extra Fast
Bloodwitch	Act II, Halls of the Dead L3	Extra Strong, Cursed
Bettleburst	Act II, Far Oasis	Magic resistant
Coldworm	Act II, Maggot Lair L3	Cold Enchanted, Magic Resistant
Dark Elder	Act II, Lost City	Extra Fast, Magic Resistant
Fangskin	Act II, Claw V Temple L2	Extra Fast, Light Enchanted
Fire Eye	Act II, Palace Cellar Level 3	Extra Fast, Fire Enchanted
Summoner	Act II, Arcane Sanctuary	Extra Strong, Extra Fast
Ancient Kaa	Act II, Tal Rasha's Tomb	Extra Strong, M Resist, Lightning
Creeping Feat	Act II, Stony Tomb L2	Extra Strong Cold Enchanted

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gameplay

THE GATEWAY TO GAMES



Voyager: futuristic spaceship or giant trowel?

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

WALKTHROUGH

Become the elite as *James Lyon* guides you through the adventures of the USS Voyager. Beat me up, Scotty!

★ REVIEWED: PCZ #84 SCORE: 84%

As proved by this month's Supertest (page 104), *Elite Force* is the best *Star Trek* game money can buy. It's not the longest game, but it's still full of tricky moments, which you can sidestep with this thorough walkthrough.

The rescue

To deactivate the blue force-field, head down the elevator, shoot the grate on the right and enter. Shoot the plasma filter at the end then head back up.



① Use that panel to let your fellow officer out.

Incursion

At the start, run along to the right to find a distribution node to shoot. To get past the broken walkway, step on the green moving things and take the high road. Jump on top of the electric press to get over the second chasm.



① Do not get captured by the Borg in case you become one.

Unavoidable Delays

Give Renner enough time to get to you before hitting the control panel. When the Jefferies tube explodes, turn around and climb

up the ladder opposite. Use the control panel at the end to turn off the force field near Chell.

Hazard duty

Hop over the crates to the other side of the walkway. Use the control panel to unflood the room. In the warp core room, use the control panel in the far-right corner first, then go back to the one on the left. Go up the ladder and use the highlighted control panel upstairs to stop the breach.



① Make your way to the switch to drain the dangerous water.

Defence

Just keep behind cover and pop out to shoot. Visit the doctor any time your health is low.



① Barrels cause explosions. It's a tradition.

Data retrieval

Shoot the pods on the floor and the searchlight objects to prevent the Etherians from respawning. When you get to the locked door, climb up the structure in the middle to get to the control panel.

The teleporter at the start has lowered itself so make your way back around.



① It's the stasis weapon. A weapon of stasis.

Deep echoes

Go to the left. Shoot the pod to clear the pool. Teleport over and use the panel to turn on the transporter below. Use all four panels around the computer core. Use the teleporter in the large flooded room and shoot the pod

at the other side. Use the two control panels to shut down the computer core.



① It won't turn it off but use the panels to get some more info about the situation.

Encounters

To fix the transporter, just shoot the objects out in the corridor to lure the fireflies into the room and they'll fix it for you. At the pool, shoot the terminal next to you to attract the fireflies, then shoot the pod in the middle. Run across before they get back to fix it.



① Sleeping on the job again.

Departure

Go through the door in the corner of the bay and down the lift. Shoot the rolling barrel. Go back up, along the right ledge and through the duct. Turn off the gas, then go through and use the control panel.

Dangerous ground

Just a matter of sneaking past guards when their backs are turned and crouching behind crates. When you get to the room with the space slug in it, wait for the guards to leave then shoot the strap holding the cargo in the middle to gain access to the control panel above. Go through the unlocked door then turn right to proceed across the mess hall.

To get the first piece of isodesium, turn right after the

mess hall and silently reach the door at the end when the guard turns the corner. Use the panel at the other side of the room. Check on the monitor above when the guard is facing away from you then run back out to the now-unlocked door. Grab it, then use the control panel at the end. Head back and around the corner, through the open door and down the hole via the crates.

The second piece is in the room with the sleeping female Klingon, in a small vent below the platform. Getting it will also distract the Klingons. Go up the second ladder and wait for the Klingons to disappear, then walk down the short corridor to the left and use the control panel. Wait for the Klingon to leave and follow him.



① Shoot here to get up there. Easy enough.



① She's not dead, she's just having a snooze.

Conflicting views 1

Sneak down the ladder and behind the crates. Grab the isodesium and enter the next room. Shoot the grate to the left and go down the ladder. Go forward and look to your right to find an inconspicuous passageway. In the flooded room, head to the far end and climb the ladder. You'll see another grate below and to the right of the

locked door. Enter and sneak through the next room to the right to get to the pump control switch. Use it then use the waste level switch by the lift when the Scavengers descend. Go through the opened door and jump on the floating crate towards the exit.



① Push the switch to flood the lower level.

Conflicting views 2

Jump into the pipe on the left and follow the path into the Hirogen section. It's impossible to sneak past them so you'll have to start shooting. Head down the elevator to the left and then forward. Jump through the vent above the barrel and the spiked ball to find Odell. After Telsia's capture, jump on the laddered platform then climb up and hop on to the moving platform and off to the other side. Jump up the crates using the burnt-out spaceship to find some handy terminals, then enter the left door.



① That's Telsia for you, always getting captured.

Disorder

Tiptoe through the sleeping quarters and into the corridor where the men are playing chess. Turn right and walk around until you reach the door on the left. Try to open it then run round the corner and wait for the men to leave. Go through it and enter the



Fire here to unflood the room.



"Wait till I get my hands on who did this."



"Here be the pods where ye find Telsia again. Aaarrh, me lad."





you'll be back



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gameplay

THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

DISORDER



That explosion quickly clears the way for you.

INFILTRATION



Yes, they'll never know who you are in this. No, really.

Always start the shooting. It's well worth it.

THE HUNTER



"Is that a big gun in your hand or just a low-perspective camera angle?"

INFORMATION



"You just stick your hand in there. We'll wait here."

room on the left. Use the control switch inside to deactivate the force-field over the door back in the corridor.

Run on through, down the vent and through the door on the left. Climb up the ladder and wait for the two people to leave. Sneak into the machine room and edge around the left-hand side until you reach the control panel. Use it to get rid of the technician. Go up the steps, through the left door, shoot the grating and enter the duct.



① "Space knight xp4 to trans-dimensional bishop tr7... no, wait. Get the rule book out again..."

Infiltration

Sneak through the rooms to the left. Quickly dive into the door beside you as the guard walks out. Use the control panel to kill the man at the monitor. Jump over the wreckage and lean around the edge of the door. Run past the guard when his back's turned and into the other corridor. Stroll through with your disguise on and proceed to the sickbay. Enter its adjoining room then go through the door beside the health terminal and get the red hypospray. Fire it in the doctor's face.

Follow Telsia and start firing at the questioning guards. Shoot the small box beside the door you just entered to stop reinforcements arriving. Use the control switch on the chair, then fight your way out to the lift.



① "Never mind your back pain, I've just beaten my high score."

The hunter

Just run underneath him and he won't be able to get you. Pop out and fire at him when he's not yellow. Defeat him and pick up the Tetryon Disruptor. Then fight your way back to the mission starting point.

Proving ground

Ignore Nelson's query about opening fire on the Borg. Get to the end of the corridor and let

Chang blow the node. Some Borg arrive but won't shoot. Don't worry about shooting first because they soon will.

A little further on you'll find Foster being assimilated behind a force-field. Wait for your crew to finish their talk and a Borg drone should lower the force-fields at the far end. Quickly run through the entrance to the right and turn right to the second bed. Use the control panel to raise it then follow the passage under the pipes and around as far as you can. Use the control panel on the bed to lower yourself down to the opposite room. Run forward and release Foster. Use the control panel on the wall to get out.

Around the corner you'll see a broken grate. Shoot it and crawl through to the other end to find a distribution node to destroy, which should save a bit of hassle.

To save Nelson from dying at the chasm, it's best to stand in front of him and take the Borg's shot. Afterwards, it's just a battle against a large number of Borg. Try to keep enough space between you and the wall behind and keep falling back as the Borg advance. Always fire a couple of grenades down the narrow corridor before they adapt.



① "Stop lazing about. We're here to rescue you."

Information

Keep to the left wall and you'll eventually come across a crawl space at ground level in a small alcove. Enter and go to the grate at the end. Shoot the distribution node to deactivate the force-field. Go down the elevators, taking care of any Borg on the way. After the cut-scene at the bottom, quickly run into the next room, select the grenade launcher and fire a magnetic mine behind the fence to the right to take out the distribution node and stop the Borg from attacking.

Covenant

Use the elevator at the end of the columned room then walk back underneath to the elevator at the other end. At the green force-field, backtrack to the lift and look up. You'll see a plasma filter which you should shoot to gain entry to a small passageway. Operate the lift and jump into it. Shoot the

node to deactivate the force-field. Keep going forward for extra health and ammo then go down and enter the vinculum chamber.

After the cut-scene, go down the corridor to the right and let Seven deactivate the force-field.



① Vinculum? What the hell's a vinculum? That is, apparently.

Infestation

The Tetryon Disruptor is the best weapon to use against Species 8472. Remember to save enough ammo for the I-Mod when the Borg reappear at the end.



① Species 8472 performs the piroquette of death.

The breach

Jump onto the top of the large vent in front of your start point. Turn left and hop up the platforms to the control panel at the top. Go down the lift behind and enter the door below. In the room opposite the blocked door, shoot the crates to the right of the entrance to reveal a passageway to crawl through. Enter the blocked room from the other side and walk behind the bed beneath the laser. Use the four panels to direct the laser to the chair blocking the door, then go into the booth to the left and use the control panel to fire it and let everyone in.



① Fire at the crates to reveal this passage.

Command

A straightforward battle against the Scavengers. The Photon Burst is the ideal weapon to use in a long-range situation like this.

Primary Encounter

Head to the end of the metal walkway and step on the lift

THE SKIRMISH



Everybody loves an exploding robot.

ARRAY



The Dreadnought produces a satisfying death sequence.

DEFENSIVE MEASURES



Start up the crane to make it hit the walkway support. My, how ingenious.

COMMAND



Munro stops off to watch an episode of *Babylon 5*.

Paris tries to think of an excuse to use his healing hands.

ATTUNEMENT



"Will ye not shoot the top o' the furnace to stop the leak now? Ah, ye will, won't ye?"

under the turret. Head back along the floor underneath and use the panel at the end left. Go back up and over the drawbridge.

The skirmish

Enter the first room on the right to top up on health and ammo. When you reach the large maintenance bot, use your Tetryon Disruptor for close-quarter attack. You'll meet more of these later on so it won't be too hard to kill him now. Try not to shoot the large column. After that, head down in the lift.



① You see what happens when you shoot the column, young man?

Array

Ascend the elevators to get to the reactor. At the top, use the control panel to raise the rods. Head under them and use another panel to lower the bullet and open the elevator door. Shoot the turrets to allow the loader to get past the blue force-fields. Lean round the edge and take them out without detection. Get to the end and use yet another panel to fire the weapon.



① If there's one thing this game has no shortage of, it's control panels.



① Turn around and take the passage to the left to get up to the rod controls.

Defensive measures

You'll find the Dreadnought weapon here. Very effective and worth keeping out for all short-range attacks. In the second chamber, use the control panel on the crane to bring down the walkway then make your way up.

Attunement

Go through the vent left of the gas leak. Shoot the third machine on the right. Make your way to the low-gravity room and jump the platforms to the top. Use the control panel to operate the lift. Allow Chang to blow the door. Use the panel in the middle of the laser chamber to realign the stream.

Invasion

Stock up your weapons then run back down the corridor to save Brian. Head on through the store and through the room to the left. When you get to the cargo bay, lean back against the door. When the platform falls you should be safe, allowing you to take out the

Harvesters at your leisure. Then proceed to the lounge.



① Run back down the corridor and heroically save Brian, but don't worry about his wife.

External stimuli

Make your way down, stocking up on the way. Take out the turret and operate the control panel inside the bottom structure to let your team down. Once the door is open, enter and jump down the pit.



① Snipe the unsuspecting Harvesters to save some hassle later on.

Matrix

Use the lit control panel underneath the matrix to open the force-field. Watch out for the two turrets at the top of the ramp and take them out from a distance with your phaser.

Onslaught

Walk through the red force-field to the right as an object passes through it. Use the control panel to the right to allow your team entry. When you reach the second room with the Harvester tubes,

prepare yourself for the titular onslaught and stay with the crew as Chell seals the door. There doesn't seem to be a way to save Biessman, but that's no great loss. When he dies just keep firing until Tuvok arrives.



① They just don't know when to give up, do they?

Visual magnitude

To get to the other side of the large chasm, shoot at it with your phaser. Certain areas will light up for a few seconds showing a pattern of invisible floor panels. Head to the right and walk on to the first. Keep shooting to look for more, but watch out for missing sections which you'll have to jump over.



① "Aw, Jaysus. Will you not get down from there before ye hurt yourselves."

Dissolution

Use the panel to the left to operate the bridge. Keep heading down the elevators until you get to the energy-dampening generator. Shoot the four lasers in each corner to put them out of

commission. After you leave your team-mates, go up in the elevator and fill up at the conveniently placed mega-weapons terminal. Ascend the final elevator.



① Shoot those glowing emitters to turn off the generator.

Command decision

The final battle. Just keep shooting at everything that moves until the Etherians arrive. The last boss may look tricky, but there's nothing more to it than constantly shooting until he cops it. Even though he doesn't look like he's taking any damage, it should take around two rounds of ammo to finish him. Just keep moving left and right behind the pillars as you fire and you should be fine. [F2]



① Keep shooting and the Etherians soon arrive to help.



① The bastard behind it all.

DEAR WANDY

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Drop us a line and we'll help chase off the spooks.

★ QUACK ARENA Phil Wand

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Please note: while we can assure you that we read every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone, as you're unlikely to reach someone who can help. Thanks.

GUIDE TO GEFORCE

Q I want some advice about which graphics card to buy. I've been working hard this summer to be able to afford one and I don't want to waste my hard-earned cash. I've been looking at specifications and stuff but I really still have no idea. I have a Pentium 500MHz with 128Mb RAM. Currently, I'm running a TNT2 16Mb card, but I really want to upgrade. I've seen the Voodoo5 5500 which looks nice, but I was thinking more of the GeForce 2 chipset. There's the GeForce 2 GTS, GeForce 2 Ultra, GeForce 2 MX... it's doing my head in. Should I pay out big bucks for a meaty card or go for a cheaper one and spend the rest on other upgrades?

Graeme Hume

A Your machine seems pretty well endowed on the processor and memory front, so why not go for broke – probably quite literally – and throw in a pixel pumping monster? We do understand your confusion with the GeForce range of cards, so here's the special Wandy guide to GeForce chips.

GeForce 256: the original Transform & Lighting muscle card, released in August of 1999. Now available for seriously sensible money – about £130.

GeForce2 GTS: seriously powerful, seriously quick, with four rendering pipelines and second-generation T&L features – about £210.

GeForce2 MX: brand new cut-down version aimed at home users on a budget. Two rendering pipelines and about 10 to 30 per cent faster than the GeForce 256 – about £100.

GeForce2 Ultra: the new king of the castle – nothing comes

close. Boasts almost three-and-a-half times the grunt of the original GeForce 256. Should cost around £275.

YELLOW FEVER

Q I've been having a rather annoying problem with my 17in Quantex monitor. At any time when I'm on my computer – be it surfing the Web, playing games or just doing homework – the monitor flashes yellow. You can still see everything but it all has this yellow tinge to it. It's been bothering me a lot as this is now my third monitor (the first two burnt out). Could it be yet another faulty monitor, a dodgy video card, or something else? I would be grateful for any help.

Michael Holden

A Monitors require a number of connections to the video card for them to work. Three of these are the red, green and blue signals that travel separately to comprise the colour image. If you cast your mind back (or forwards, given your age) to physics lessons, you may remember experiments involving the mixture of coloured lights as being somewhat different to mixing paints. Red, green and blue gave white, but if you took away blue, you'd end up with yellow. And that's what I suspect has happened to your monitor. Somehow it's lost the blue section of the signal, and this results in everything having that sickly yellow hue.

Unfortunately, this could be occurring anywhere between the video chip on your video card and the tube in the monitor. Unplug the video cable and make sure all the pins in the sockets on both ends are standing up straight. Plug it back in, wiggle the cable, then check it's screwed into the back of your PC nice and tight. If you still have no luck, try the monitor on a friend's PC to see if it's your video card. If it's the monitor, I'd recommend trying a different brand, they really don't deserve your loyalty with that track record.

IMMIGRANT GEFORCE

Q Could you please tell me if I can buy a graphics card from the US and use it on my UK-spec PC? The card in question is a GeForce2 MX AGP – I can't find it anywhere except on US websites. I already have a Voodoo3 2000 in my AGP slot so it should fit.

Jordan McFall

A There's no technical reason to stop you ordering your new card from the US, but you might get hit for import tax by the customs men if they feel so inclined. Having said that, you should be able to get away with it – but we never told you so.

The only real downside is ensuring that your new toy is covered against damage or theft on the way across, and that the supplier is able to honour the warranty if it should go wrong. Some UK firms get uppity when a card with a US part number lands in their lap.

Once you have the card, first set your machine back to standard VGA (640 x 480 pixels) and then uninstall the drivers for the old 3dfx card. Only then should you install the new GeForce.

COOL ENOUGH?

Q I recently upgraded my computer from an Intel Pentium II 266MHz to a Pentium III 800MHz. To do this, I had to buy a new motherboard. However, I was able to keep the old case. Will my new chip require additional cooling, or will the old case be fine to use as it is?

Matt

A Assuming the plastic fan in your Power Supply Unit (PSU) is still purring round in silence, and the PSU itself is big enough for the job, you should be OK. Just make sure you have a fan on the heat sink big enough to launch an Airbus.

It's always a good idea to have space enough at the bottom of your case for a fan to be mounted so it blows cool air around your PC's internals

“There's the GeForce 2 GTS, GeForce 2 Ultra, GeForce 2 MX... it's doing my head in”

GRAEME HUME FEELS THE FORCE

– especially considering the additional heat that gets pumped out by the latest CPUs and video cards.

Take a look at www.maplin.co.uk where they list all types of fan, some of which connect to your motherboard and report back exciting statistics such as the spin speed. Look for part number QC23A.

TEENAGE KICKS

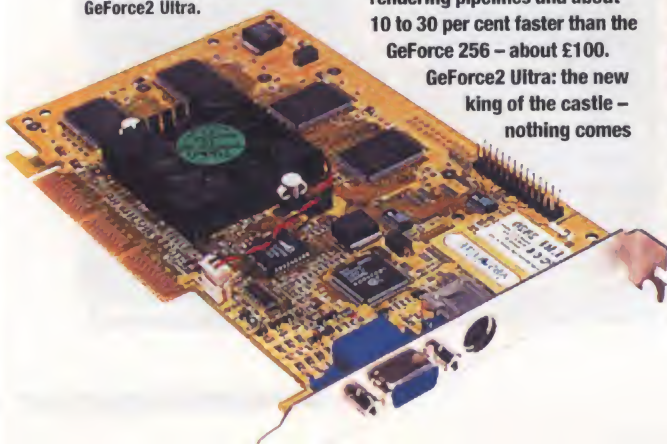
Q I'm a hard-up 13-year-old boy. I have a crappy old P100 PC with 32Mb of RAM, Windows 95 and a 1Gb hard drive. I'm planning to network this machine to another PC in my house (a Pentium II 350MHz with 128Mb of RAM). What would I need to buy so that my PC can play *Half-Life* and *Age Of Empires 2* over the network? Also, would an AMD K6-2 3D 500MHz Socket7 fit my motherboard, or would I need to get a new one? And what would be a good hard drive to get so that I can have enough room to install the games I want to play. Would it save a lot of time and money to just buy a cheap new box?

Tom Saunders

A Basically, to network two machines together you need at least a network card in each machine and a cable between them. This can either be COAX (a round cable like your TV aerial lead) or twisted pair. Twisted pair contains eight teeny wires twisted together into four pairs – hence the name. COAX can be run at only 10Mbps, whereas twisted pair can run at 10 or 100Mbps. We'd recommend using twisted pair and a hub: however, it's beyond the scope of this section. See our feature called *How To Set Up A Home Network* in PCZ #84.

As for the AMD chip, it's very unlikely that you'll be able to use it in your old Pentium motherboard. The original pre-MMX Pentium only had a single-voltage supply to the processor, whereas the later MMX chips and the 3DNow! AMD chips require two

Just bootiful. The supremely powerful GeForce2 Ultra.





Half-Life: one of the finest multiplayer games of all time. That is, if you can set up a network to play it over.

different voltages. The processor socket will actually be able to tell you: if it has Socket 7 moulded onto it, then it's dual power and should be able to supply the two voltages. Next, you have to find out if the motherboard can meet the clock speed required by the processor. For the K6-2 500 you're going to need a 100MHz clock with a 5x multiplier (but, again, you've got very little hope of an old board matching this). Basically, we reckon you're going to need a new motherboard – which is probably going to cost more than the CPU.

Hard drives are simple to upgrade, especially if you just add them to your system as a secondary (ie D:) drive. However, if we take into account all the other limitations of your current box, you'd probably be better off looking for a new machine. Be careful though. The cheaper end of the market offers very basic video cards which won't be up to playing the latest games. A quick look round the classified adverts in your local paper might help, especially if the previous owner can show you it playing the game of your choice.

PACKING A TROJAN

Q You will be an absolute hero if you can sort this one for me. Some months ago a not-very-nice person sent me a Trojan. My virus checker spotted it but could only delete the infected file and not repair it. Ever since, when Windows 98 starts up I get an error saying, "Cannot find the file Kernel.exe [or one of its components]. Make sure the path and filename are

libraries are available." I have asked a few people and most of them haven't even heard of Kernel.exe.

Peter Gough

A Kerne1 (note that it's the digit '1' on the end, not the letter 'L') is the default name for the Subseven server, Trojan. If your virus scanner had not picked up this nasty little swine, your system would have been open to anyone with a Subseven client.

Your virus checker detected it and deleted it, but unfortunately it looks like the Trojan had already started to hook itself in. Now when Windows starts up, it tries to execute the original file which of course isn't there any more. What you've got to do is find where it's expecting it to be. Check for kerne1.exe entries in both WIN.INI and SYSTEM.INI (both these configuration files live in your Windows folder) and, should you find it, remove any reference to it. For example, we're guessing you have shell=Explorer.exe kerne1.exe in your system.ini file; this should be just shell=Explorer.exe. Job done. See www.symantec.com/avcenter for more details.

PCI PLEASE DIE

Q I'm interested in upgrading my graphics card to the best card on the home PC market. The problem is, I only have PCI slots. I'm aware of the Voodoo5 5500 PCI, but would like to know if any of the GeForce2 or similarly high-spec cards have PCI interfaces.

Paul Reeves

A PCI obstinately refuses to pop its clogs. However, it's only a matter of time before manufacturers give up supporting it and then that'll be that. If you're going to be spending big money on a video card then why not spend a teensy bit more on your motherboard? Then you can get yourself an all-singing, all-dancing AGP card. If you're on a budget, though, the Voodoo5 4500 and 5500 are both available in PCI form, but we've been unable to source a PCI version of the latest GeForce cards.



Ⓢ No, not that sort of Trojan, stupid.

CHEATS UNLIMITED

THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE CHOICE FOR GAMING HELP

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- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>A - 01
Abe's Exodius
Abe's Oddysee
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Age of Empires 1 & 2
Age of Wonder
Airline Tycoon
Alien Trilogy
Alien vs Predator
Alpha Centauri
Andreotti Racing
Ants
Area 51
Army Men Series
Atomic Bomberman
B - 02
Baldur's Gate
Batman Forever
Battlezone 1 & 2
Blade Runner
Blam, Machine Head
Blood
Braveheart
Brian Lara Cricket
Broken Sword 1 & 2
Business Tycoon
C - 03
Caesar 1, 2 & 3
Cannon Fodder
Carmageddon 1 & 2
Champ. Manager Series
Chasm: The Rift
Civilisation 1 & 2
Colin McRae Rally
Colonization
Comm. & Cong. Series
Commandos Series
Constructor
Croc: Legend of Gobbos
Crusaders of M & Magic
Cueball Jimmy White's 2
D - 04
Dark Forces
Dark Reign
Day of the Tentacle
Deathtrap Dungeon
Delta Force 1 & 2
Descent 1, 2 & 3
Destruction Derby 1 & 2
Deus-EX
Diablo 1 & 2
Die By The Sword
Die Hard Trilogy 1 & 2
Dino Crisis
Discworld Noir
Dogs of War
Doom 1 & 2
Dracula Resurrection
Driver
Duke Nukem Series
Dungeon Keeper 1 & 2
Dynasty Wars
E - 05
Earth 2150
Earthworm Jim 1 & 2
Emergency
Empire of the Ants
ESPN X Games
Euro 2000
Excalibur 2555 AD
Excessive Speed
Extreme Assault
Extreme Pinball
F - 06
F-22 Series
FA PL F1ball Man. 2000
Fatal Racing
FIFA Series
Final Doom
Final Fantasy 7 & 8
Firestorm
Flight Sim 98
Flight Unlimited 1 & 2
Flying Heroes
Formula 1 Series
Formula One Grand Prix
Forsaken
Frogger
Full Throttle
G - 07
Gabriel Knight 3
Gangsters</p> | <p>Gex
Goblins
Goosebumps
G-Police 1 & 2
Grand Prix Manager 2
Grand Touring
Grim Fandango
Ground Control
GTA 1, 2 & London
H - 08
Half Life
Half Life: Opp. Forces
Hardwar
Heavy Gear
Hercules
Heretic
Heroes Of M & M Series
Hexen 1 & 2
Hi Octane
Hidden and Dangerous
Homeworld
I - 09
Icewind Dale
Imperialism 2
Imperium Galactica
Incoming
In Cold Blood
Indiana Jones Series
Indianapolis
Int. Cricket Captain
Interstate 76 & Nitro
Iwar
J - 10
Jeff Gordon Ex. Racing
Judge Dredd
Jurassic Park
K - 11
Kingpin
Klingon Honor Guard
Knights and Merchants
L - 12
Lego Island
Lego Loco
Lego Racers
Lego Rock Raiders
Lemmings 2 & 3D
Links
Little Big Adventure 2
Longest Journey
Lords of Magic SE
M - 13
Machine Hunter
Madden NFL 97 & 98
Magic Carpet 1 & 2
Marian Gothic
Mass Destruction
Master of Orion 1 & 2
MDK 1 & 2
Mechcommander
Mechwarrior 2
Men in Black
Messiah
Metal Gear Solid
Microsoft Flight Sim 98
Midtown Madness
Monopoly
Monster Truck Mad. 1&2
Mortal Kombat Series
Moto Racer
Motocross Madness
Motorhead
Myth: The Fallen Lords
N - 14
Nascar 2
NBA Hangtime
NBA Jam Extreme
NBA Live Series95
Need For Speed 1, 2 & 3
NFS Porsche Unleashed
NFL Quarterback Club
NHL Series
Nightmare Creatures
Nox
Nuclear Strike
O - 15
Off. Formula 1 Racing
Omikron: Nomad Soul
Operation Bodycount
Outcast
Outlaws
Outrun
P - 16</p> | <p>Pandemonium 1 & 2
Pharaoh
Pinball Fantasies
Pitfall
Planescape Torment
POD
Police Quest: SWAT 2
Populous 1 & 2
Populous: The Beginning
Premier Manager Series
Prince of Persia
Pro Pinball
Q - 17
Quake 1, 2 & 3
R - 18
Railroad Tycoon 1 & 2
Rainbow Islands
Rainbow Six
Rally Champ. 2000
Rally Cross
Rayman
Redline
Requiem: Ave. Angels
Resident Evil 1, 2 & 3
Revolt
Rival Realms
Road Rash
Rogue Spear & Urb. Ops
Rogue Squadron
Rollage 1 & 2
Roller Coaster Tycoon
S - 19
S.C.A.R.S.
Sanatorium
Screamers 1 & 2
Screamers Rally
Sensible World of Soccer
Settlers 1, 2 & 3
Shogo Mobile Armor Div
Shogun: Total War
Silver
Sim City Series
Sim Theme Park
Sim Tower
Sims
Sin
Slave Zero
Soldier of Fortune
Sonic 3D Blast
Sonic and Knuckles Coll.
Soul Reaver: Leg. of Kain
South Park
Special Ops
Spectra Core
Star Lancer
Star Trek: Armada
Star Trek: Birth Of Fed.
Star Trek: Hidden Evil
Star Wars: Force Comm.
Star Wars: Phantom Men.
Star Wars: Racer
Star Wars: Rogue Squad.
Star Wars: S. Of Empire
StarCraft
Stonekeep
Street Fighter 2
Street Fighter Alpha
Super Bubsy
Super Frog
Superbike World Champ
Swat 3
SWIV 3D
Syndicate Wars
System Shock
T - 20
Tachyon: The Fringe
Take No Prisoners
Tarzan
Test Drive Series
The Curse Of M. Island
The Hunt for Red Oct.
The Settlers 1, 2 & 3
The Sims
Theme Hospital
Theme Park
Theme Park World
Thief 1 & 2
Tiberian Sun
Time Commando
TOCA 1 & 2
Tom Clancy's SSN</p> | <p>Tomb Raider 1, 2, 3 & 4
Tony Hawk's 2
Total Annihilation
Total Ann.: Kingdoms
Toy Story 1 & 2
Trespasser
Triple Play 97, 98 & 99
Turk 1 & 2
U - 21
Ultima Underworld
Ultimate Soc Man Series
Unreal
Unreal Tournament
Urban Chaos
US Navy Fighters 1 & 97
V - 22
Vampire: Masq. Red.
Vigilante
Virtua Fighter
Virtual Springfield
Virus
VR Powerball Racing
W - 23
War Games: Defcon 1
War Gods
Warcraft 1 & 2
Wargasm
Warhammer: D. Omen
Warzone 2100
Wing Commander IV
Wipeout & XL
Wolfenstein 3D
World Cup 98
Worms Series
WWF Wrestlemania
X - 24
X-Com Series
X-Files
X-Files: The Game
X-Files: Pro Boarder
X-Men: Child Of Atom
X-Wing</p> |
|---|---|---|---|



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WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let **PC ZONE** ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers...

★ MAN ON A MISSION Adam Philips

LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line. Please remember that technical issues are not covered by Watchdog – If you've got a techle problem, then write to Dear Wandy (page 150).

WRITE TO Watchdog, **PC ZONE**, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **Watchdog**

SIM-LESS

Q After reading the review in your magazine, I decided to purchase myself a copy of *The Sims*. The game is great and works fine. However, when I try to register it online, in order to access the vast amount of downloadable new items and the like, it tells me that there is a problem validating my serial number. No matter how often I try, it's always the same.

I have e-mailed EA support several times and they just ignore me or send me an automated guide that deals with the game crashing. Please help!

Ady Carter

A It's a classic title and the downloadable elements do add longevity to an already addictive game. Watchdog dropped EA a line to see if it

could shed some light on your conundrum: "Demand for *The Sims* was so strong our web masters failed to keep up with demand and forgot to add a batch of valid serial numbers to their database," came back their response. "This meant anybody with a serial number from this batch could not register on the website."

EA says this problem has now been corrected. In the meantime, anybody who contacted them with this problem has had their serial number checked against EA's own internal database, and asked if they would like the updates sent to them on a CD.

Finally, EA says, "Our e-mail support is now fronted by an automated system – I suspect Ady has received an automated

response. We are currently looking at ways of making this system easier for people."

Let us know if you're now happily playing *The Sims* in all its expanded glory, Ady...

QUAKE SHAM?

Q As you take an interest in the behaviour of the companies you allow to advertise in your magazine, I thought I'd make you aware that Gameplay.com has been advertising *Quake III* for £17.99 in the most recent issue (and I believe in the past few issues) of **PC ZONE**.

However, upon phoning them to place an order, we were informed that *Quake III* is not available at this price but at £26.99 instead. The company pointed out that the disclaimer states "prices are subject to

fluctuation" which suggests to me they fluctuate up every time a customer tries to place an order, and the low price is there simply to drum up interest. Furthermore, they tried to sell us a copy of *Unreal Tournament* instead. This behaviour seems a little dubious.

Peter Thomas

A A serious allegation and one worthy of further investigation. Watchdog contacted Eileen McLaughlin, Gameplay's customer service manager, to find out what the score is with *Quake III*'s pricing. "Thank you for contacting **PC ZONE** to express dissatisfaction with your experience of dealing with Gameplay," she offered. "Firstly, we regret that we were unable to fulfill his request for copy of *Quake III Arena* at £17.99. Having checked our system, I am able to confirm that we have been out of stock of *Quake III* since August 14. As an alternative, our sales operatives are encouraged to cross sell to a game of a similar genre. In this instance, it was *Unreal Tournament*. If this action offended Peter then I can only apologise."

She went on to say the cost that they will incur with their new supply of *Quake III* has changed. As a result prices have reflected this change. "Unfortunately, prices change and items are withdrawn continually," she continued. "The games market is forever changing. It is not our intention to mislead or misinform customers either by false advertising or at the point of sale. Our prices are correct at the time of going to press. If there are any amendments then we do make every possible effort to ensure the necessary changes are made in time for print."

She does hope that your bad experience of dealing with Gameplay will not prevent you from using the service again.

LETSBUYITANDWAITWEKSFORIT.COM

The saga of purchasing online continues...

Q I am writing to you so that you may warn other readers about the perils of buying online. I recently purchased an Acer CD-RW drive from LetsBuyIt.com. The offer was particularly appealing as the price and specification were good. Now, bearing in mind that this is only the second purchase I have made from this company (the first one was a disaster), I decided to give them another go. After placing my order online, I noticed that the delivery time had increased from ten days to 15. Fair enough, my first order never even turned up (another story) but 15 working days would be OK. After 24 days had come and gone, I started to wonder.

A short phone call revealed that this particular item had a delay on it. Why had no one bothered to inform me? I placed the order on July 28 and my bank account was debited on August 1. It was now August 31, so they'd had my money for almost a month. I was also told that no estimated delivery date was known, so I could either wait or cancel. So much for customer service. No apologies. Nothing. Just tough luck!

In my opinion, it's about time companies such as this one realised that the good old public won't stand being treated this way

anymore. I'd rather pay money for goods from a high street shop than to a company that just sits back and makes interest on your money while you wait and wait for the goods to hopefully arrive. For those of you who've yet to make an online purchase, take heed – sometimes the saving of a few pounds isn't worth the heartache. I've learnt my lesson...

Rick Stokes.

A Another month and yet another disappointed punter who feels let down by the service they've received while shopping online. Off Watchdog went to ask LetsBuyIt.com why Rick has been messed around quite so badly. "We would like to extend our sincerest apologies to Mr Stokes for not receiving

his delivery in time," offered a spokesperson for the company. "We are disappointed to learn this is not the first time Mr Stokes has had a negative experience with LetsBuyIt.com, and would like to assure him that all concerns are taken seriously."

It says that although the majority of its members receive their goods within 15 days of their co-buy close date, "one late delivery is one too many". Each late delivery is investigated thoroughly in order to rectify the situation swiftly and continually improve our processes, keeping our members updated directly."

Its goal is to "ensure that 100 per cent of members receive their products within our 15 day target." The spokesperson went on to say that LetsBuyIt.com has more than 890,000 members across Europe and a large percentage of them make repeat purchases, "suggesting that customer satisfaction runs high."

Whatever the case, there was no specific explanation of the problems you have experienced, Rick. And no sign of any goodwill gestures to make up for them...

The screenshot shows the LetsBuyIt.com website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Shop together...and save together!'. Below that, a section titled 'As the number of buyers grows up' displays a bar chart showing a price drop from £11.99 to £9.99. A banner below the chart says '1 Million holiday minutes to be won!'. The bottom of the screenshot features a quote: 'You can buy it, but you may not receive it.'

"I can assure Peter that his comments are taken seriously and are used as a means to improve the level of service we offer," she concluded.

THE HORROR!

Q I bought a copy of *Deus Ex* a couple of days ago, having read your review and talked to friends about it. I hadn't been able to get the demo working, but I assumed it was simply an incompatibility that would be sorted out in the final release. I was therefore rather surprised when instead of autorunning, the full game CD simply repeated the message shown on the demo, indicating a problem with Windows. I e-mailed the tech support line and found *Deus Ex* is actually incompatible with Win95a.

Nowhere on the box is this mentioned and I am left with a game I can't play, and can't return to Dixons due to its policy on returned software (if the package is open,

"I e-mailed tech support and found that *Deus Ex* is actually incompatible with Win95a"

CHRIS D IS TRAUMATISED AT NOT BEING ABLE TO PLAY *DEUS EX*

they will only take it back if it won't work on their machines. Which of course it will – they all have Win98).

Could you please contact Eidos and inquire as to whether a patch is available to fix this problem?

Chris D

A You poor, poor sod. Buying one of the greatest PC titles ever released and then being unable to play it? It's bordering on customer cruelty. We had to get this sorted out and went straight to Eidos to find out how to get the gaming great running, and to discover how this horrendous situation had been able to slip through their testing procedures: "A problem in the *Deus Ex* set-up program, discovered late in the testing process, made it impossible for Win95a users to install and play the game," says a spokesperson for the company. "When the problem was discovered, we made the assumption that as this version of the Win95 OS was so old, no one capable of running the game would have it. Looks like we were wrong."

Too bloody right you were. Never mind though, there are now two fixes.

Number One: "If you just can't wait to play *Deus Ex*, you'll be able to download a patch from www.eidos.com. Once you grab the patch, you can copy the entire contents of the *Deus Ex* CD

onto your hard drive and then copy the contents of the patch into your System folder, overwriting the original versions of the files. Then you will be able to install the game from your hard drive."

Number Two: "If you don't mind waiting a while, you can contact Eidos Customer Service and get a CD, complete with the fix."

Eidos says it is sorry the problem ever occurred and, "hope everyone who encountered the Win95a installation problem now enjoys *Deus Ex*."

Phew.

EA EH?

Q I recently downloaded the official *FIFA 99* patch from the EA Sports website and was pleased with the improvements made to the graphics. However, I noticed that when I played a match, the pitch graphics were corrupted.

So I sent an e-mail to EA's support department, asking if there was any way to fix this problem. I received a reply the next day saying the new patch had made the game incompatible with my Voodoo 3 3000 card. I was a bit hacked off by this, so I sent another e-mail to EA, asking if it was going to release a patch to fix this problem.

Again, I promptly received a reply that said: "Unfortunately, there are no plans for any patches to add additional support for Voodoo 3 cards to this game." The reason I am so annoyed by this is the fact that *FIFA 99* was bundled with my Voodoo 3 card.

It seems that as soon as EA releases a new *FIFA* game, it forgets that people actually own some of the older games, and do not want to fork out the best part of 40 quid for a slight update. I used to have faith in EA, but now I will think twice before I buy from them again.

Jonathan Walker

A Intriguing stuff. Indeed, EA itself is a tad intrigued with your dilemma: "The only patch we are aware of for *FIFA 99* is designed specifically to make the game compatible with the Voodoo 3 (among other cards and features added)," says a spokesperson for the company. "We have not heard of any previous reports of the patch making the game incompatible with Voodoo 3."

EA is curious as you mentioned you were told otherwise by someone at EA support: "He may have spoken to US support (support@ea.com) rather than UK support (uk-support@ea.com)," says EA. "If he did speak to someone here, we'd like to know who."

Watchdog has passed on your details to the relevant bods at EA so they can get to the heart of your problem... **R2**

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, whether it be a ropey piece of software or a shoddy PC, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs

especially, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means that we can resolve your problems much quicker.

PC ZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS



WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW AND DEMO

We've said it before, but we hopefully won't say it again...

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

The demo is finished, the review code is being finalised and next month we're going to have both exclusively. Well, it is Christmas after all, and what better time to lop off a few heads?

TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES

Is she dead? Is she? Join the memorial service and see for yourself in our festive review.

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

Guybrush Threepwood, everyone's favourite point-and-clicker is back for another adventure. We're going to review this as well.

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

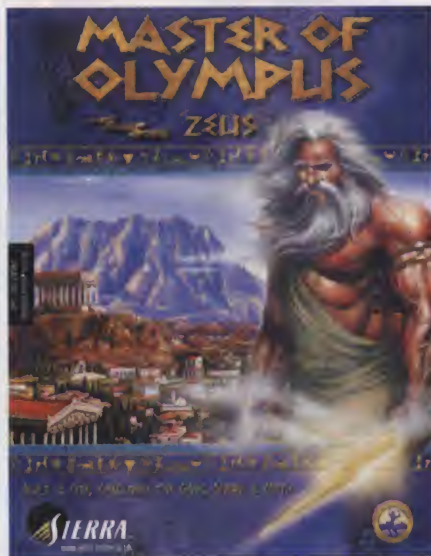
The name's Archer. Cate Archer. And I'm starring in a brand new shooter from Monolith that *PC ZONE* is reviewing. OK, ya?

BEST HARDWARE

It's been a busy year for hardware boffins. We show you the best buys, from motherboards to processors, graphic cards to speakers.

ON SALE
THURSDAY 14 DECEMBER

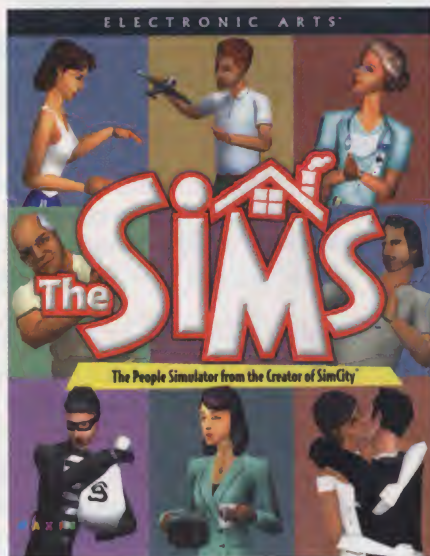
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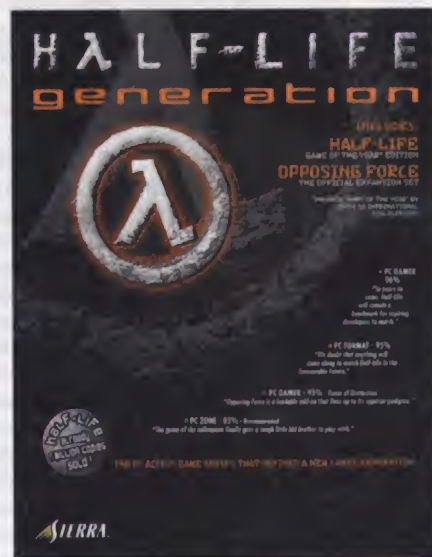
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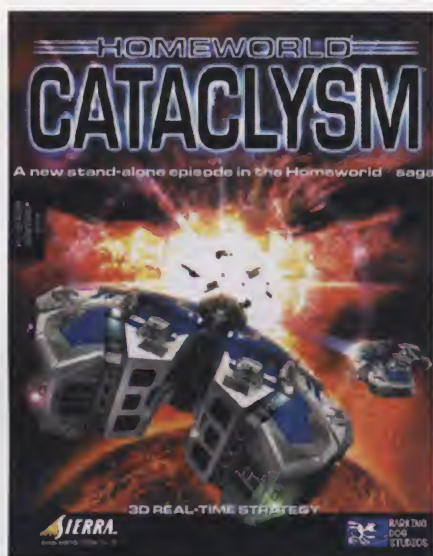
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THE SIMS



HALF LIFE GENERATION



HOMEWORLD CATAclysm



POLICE QUEST SWAT 3 ELITE



AIKENS ARTIFACT



SHOGUN TOTAL WAR

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON



PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the new *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could

all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox

complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY

In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET

If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a classic, we *mean* it.



Buy on-line www.jakarta.co.uk

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #71 • 95%

✦ Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the 'Generations' pack.
PUBLISHER Sierra
• 0118 9209 100

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

PCZ #81 • 90%

✦ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

QUAKE III ARENA

PCZ #87 • 89%

✦ The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

STAR TREK: VOYAGER - ELITE FORCE

PCZ #94 84%

The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever team fighting by your side, renew faith in an increasingly multiplayer genre.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

PCZ #88 • 82%

✦ The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

PCZ #77 • 81%

✦ It might not be the best FPS you can buy, but it's definitely the scariest. *Aliens Vs Predator* is also the only game that offers three distinct ways of playing through the game, so if you're looking for a solid single-player blast, this provides excellent value for money.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

PCZ #89 • 80%

✦ More like an arcade explosion of unmitigated violence than a FPS in the *Half-Life* mould, *SoF* is a great deal of fun. It's also very sick. If you can stomach amputations and decapitations, then we can guarantee you pure, mindless entertainment.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS

PCZ #93 • 78%

✦ The team of *Daikatana*-defectors have come up with a much better game – using the LithTech engine and basing the levels on songs by Kiss. This is not cutting-edge gaming, but you'll find it is a solid, fun shooter.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME

PCZ #77 • 77%

✦ This controversial title should be talked about for its excellent gameplay and graphics rather than its violence and swearing. Because, quite frankly, that side of the game was crap. We still stand by the game, though. It's classic adult entertainment.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOUR DIVISION

PCZ #71 • 76%

✦ Half *Quake* and half *MechWarrior*, this game breathes fresh air into a stale genre. Boasting great graphics and a good storyline, its only faults are lffy AI and the fact that it's a bit too easy for hardcore *Quake* fans.
PUBLISHER Microdots • 00 33 1 4601 5401

STRATEGY

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #89 • 93%

✦ *Shogun* is the first strategy game that has blown us away in a long time. Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate enemy generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options never get in the way of instant playability.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
• 01753 549442

AGE OF EMPIRES II

PCZ #84 • 88%

✦ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOE II*, the gameplay has been honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and opt for this classic RTS.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

GROUND CONTROL

PCZ #92 • 87%

✦ RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME

PCZ #68 • 86%

✦ A title that lives up to its name, *Civilization II* is probably the oldest game in the Top 100 and it will probably still be around in years to come. Turn-based and in 2D, it offers unlimited replayability and depth. One of the few games that everyone should own.
PUBLISHER Hasbro • 020 8569 1234

SUDDEN STRIKE

PCZ #96 • 86%

NEWENTRY *Sudden Strike* mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism, in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns, make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.
PUBLISHER CDV • 0208 880 4144

HOMEWORLD: CATAclySM

PCZ #96 • 85%

NEWENTRY Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld*, has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

EARTH 2150

PCZ #90 • 84%

✦ A fantastic 3D engine and great detail team up with sheer playability to make this one of the best RTSs around. Second only to *Shogun* this year, *Earth 2150* is a more traditional strategy title, but it takes the genre even further than it has been before.
PUBLISHER Mattel Interactive • 0144 424 6333

C&C: RED ALERT 2

PCZ #95 • 82%

✦ After the disappointment of *Tiberian Sun* we weren't expecting much from this sequel, but we were pleasantly surprised. *RA2* manages to mix a believable story line with enhanced gameplay and extremely versatile units. An entertaining sequel.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

IMPERIUM GALACTICA II

PCZ #85 • 79%

✦ Space expansion and empire building have never looked so good. This title boasts the depth of a turn-based strategy game with the immediate action of real-time, plus a great interface and tutorial, which means you'll know your way around in no time.
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

PCZ #56 • 77%

✦ With a ridiculous number of units and unrivalled pace, the original *TA* still stands head and shoulders above more recent efforts. No story to speak of and weak single-player action, but still, for a tenner, no one should be without a copy.
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #93 • 94%

➤ Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
• 020 8636 3000



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

PCZ #80 • 91%

➤ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE –
REDEMPTION

PCZ #92 • 89%

➤ This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ #87 • 87%

➤ An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



BALDUR'S GATE II

PCZ #96 • 85%

NEWENTRY The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. A must for RPG fans.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



FINAL FANTASY VII

PCZ #66 • 80%

➤ Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it should be out on budget soon.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



FALLOUT 2

PCZ #71 • 79%

➤ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



ICEWIND DALE

PCZ #93 • 75%

➤ Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but we'll wait for *BG2*.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



DIABLO II

PCZ #93 • 72%

➤ Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever.

PUBLISHER Havas Interactive • 0118 920 9100



ODIUM

PCZ #87 • 70%

➤ Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences à la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Odium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked for a while.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ACTION/ADVENTURES

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #71 • 88%

➤ If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts
• 020 7368 2255



DISCWORD NOIR

PCZ #79 • 87%

➤ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791



BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR

PCZ #96 • 86%

NEWENTRY As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



THE NOMAD SOUL

PCZ #83 • 86%

➤ Distinctly odd, but original, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

INDIANA JONES AND THE
INFERNAL MACHINE

PCZ #84 • 83%

➤ LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest *Indy*, with the adventure elements still in place.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000



METAL GEAR SOLID

PCZ #96 • 82%

NEWENTRY Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000



MESSIAH

PCZ #85 • 81%

➤ Shiny's wonderful shooter features a chubby cherub, but also a bunch of whores and lots of gratuitous swearing. As Bob, under-age agent of God, you must possess people's bodies and, like a good and typically hypocritical Christian, kill everything that gets in your way.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS

PCZ #94 81%

➤ Not a vast improvement on its predecessor, but unlike most PS conversions, you can pump up the resolution as high as you want it. The usual array of zombies are joined by more special monsters and it keeps the George Romero spirit alive – or dead.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



NOCTURNE

PCZ #84 • 79%

➤ Why would you pay good money to be scared? Because it's damn good fun, and if you find the average PC game laughable, we dare you to sit through *Nocturne* with your curtains drawn. It's a beautiful exercise in computer-generated fear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 • 01753 722900

MONKEY ISLAND
BOUNTY PACK

PCZ #74 • 79%

➤ *Monkey Island 1* and *2* are perhaps the finest point-and-clickers ever to grace the PC. The third outing may have been disappointing, but it would be a sin to exclude it from this excellent triple pack.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 4567000

RACING GAMES

MIDTOWN MADNESS

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #96 • 84%

NEWENTRY Buckle up for some high-speed driving action, as you race around the streets of London and San Francisco in this fantastic sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game for the PC. The original *MM* was a belter, but with more cars and races, and improved controls, *MM2* is the new daddy.
PUBLISHER Microsoft
• 0345 002000

BUDGET

COLIN MCRAE RALLY

PCZ #68 • 82%

✱ Sporting an updated *TOCA* engine, *Colin McRae* is still the benchmark in rally simulations. It boasts realistic handling, car customisation and stacks of multiplayer options, which all contribute to keeping it well ahead of its rivals. It's now available as a budget title, which makes it an absolute steal.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

LE MANS 24 HOURS

PCZ #87 • 81%

✱ Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

GRAND PRIX 3

PCZ #94 80%

✱ This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated GP2, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000

PCZ #90 • 79%

✱ Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

RALLY MASTERS

PCZ #89 • 79%

✱ Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

TOCA 2

PCZ #76 • 78%

✱ Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

PCZ #84 • 77%

✱ Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.
PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

PCZ #92 • 77%

✱ More mad two-wheeled antics in a sequel that doesn't improve on the original, apart from the graphical update. It's still fun and far removed from reality, but you might want to track down the first one in the bargain bin.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

SUPERBIKE 2000

PCZ #88 • 75%

✱ The best motorcycling sim on the PC, this game sports incredible visuals, slick handling and astonishing detail. But it's too easy to fall off unless you use computer-assisted help. However, for pure two-wheeled action, *Motocross Madness* is still the best option.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

FALCON 4

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #72 • 89%

✱ We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* sports beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing. If you're going to buy one flight sim, make it this one – we guarantee that you won't be disappointed.
PUBLISHER MicroProse
• 01454 893893

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: THE MIGHTY 8TH

PCZ #96 • 87%

NEWENTRY *B17* reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive/Microprose • 01454 893 893

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR

PCZ #68 • 85%

✱ This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece may seem a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title.
PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET

PCZ #83 • 84%

✱ If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure you watch out for friendly fire.
PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400

MIG ALLEY

PCZ #80 • 84%

✱ *Mig Alley* gives hardcore flight simmers' piloting skills a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III

PCZ #82 • 83%

✱ For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the *Flight Sim* series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CRIMSON SKIES

PCZ #96 • 82%

NEWENTRY This game moves away from the detailed simulation mould of so many plane games, and concentrates more on all out dogfighting. It's instantly gratifying, fast paced, entertaining and adds a much needed twist of humour to an otherwise serious genre.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

FLANKER 2.0

PCZ #85 • 82%

✱ Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yankee blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding nevertheless, *Flanker 2.0* recreates the real thing in minute detail. However, be warned: hours of practice are needed before you can go off shooting stuff.
PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300

ENEMY ENGAGED: COMANCHE HOKUM

PCZ #89 • 82%

✱ The latest helicopter sim to hit the shelves, it is also the best one to date. In no other game do you feel the excitement of being involved in a real war, largely due to an excellent dynamic campaign mode.
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

JANE'S USAF

PCZ #88 • 80%

✱ *USAF* offers playability that allows non-hardcore flyers to have a successful spin. While this means that the standards of realism are nowhere near other titles, it fills the gap for those of us who don't care about such things. This is a great flight sim that anybody can enjoy.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SPORTS

FIFA 2000

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #84 • 86%

★ The FIFA franchise has been rolling on for years and it gets better each time. Although it missed a Classic rating by a whisker, FIFA 2000 is still the best conversion of the finest sport known to man. You should be able to find it on budget soon. Or you could always fork out the full price for the recent Euro 2000, which is essentially the same game.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
• 01753 549442



SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

PCZ #85 • 85%

★ Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 8738 8199



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

PCZ #92 • 84%

★ It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthy purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



NBA LIVE 2000

PCZ #85 • 82%

★ As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as Inside Drive, it's a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



OPEN TENNIS 2000

PCZ #92 • 81%

★ Not since Super Tennis on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. Very playable and unsurpassed in multiplayer.

PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070

MANAGEMENT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #96 • 93%

NEWENTRY This update for the greatest management game ever, sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



THE SIMS

PCZ #87 • 85%

★ This game offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

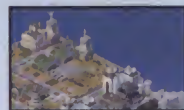


CAESAR III

PCZ #70 • 84%

★ Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



SIMCITY 3000

PCZ #74 • 83%

★ Ten years on, SimCity remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, SimCity 3000 is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

PCZ #75 • 82%

★ Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, RT is hugely addictive.

PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

SPACE COMBAT

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER

BENCHMARK
GAME

PCZ #82 • 87%

★ The spirit of Elite lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656



TERMINUS

PCZ #93 • 86%

★ Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? Terminus proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out FreeSpace 2.

PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com



FREESPACE 2

PCZ #84 • 85%

★ Completely different from X, FreeSpace 2 offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4222



X-WING: ALLIANCE

PCZ #77 • 81%

★ At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running X-Wing series. Certainly the best-looking X-Wing game to date, Alliance is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



STARLANCER

PCZ #91 • 80%

★ While Starlancer doesn't do anything startlingly new, it is a highly polished affair with compulsive gameplay and gorgeous visuals. A must for space sim fans.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

BENCHMARK
GAME

BUDGET

PCZ #79 • 90%

★ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and Hidden & Dangerous is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. From the first mission it grabs you by the balls and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

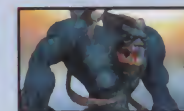


SWAT 3

PCZ #85 • 87%

★ Artificial intelligence doesn't get any better than this. Add some truly spectacular graphics, an ingenious command interface and edge-of-your-seat gameplay, and you've got a top title.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



GIANTS

PCZ #95 • 85%

★ This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game, includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



ROGUE SPEAR

PCZ #84 • 83%

★ We loved Rainbow Six and, although this follow-up can't match Hidden & Dangerous for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



BATTLEZONE 2

PCZ #84 • 79%

★ Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed Battlezone. The fight for world domination has never looked so good.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

ONLINE ONLY

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK



BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #92 • 90%

✪ The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better with this expansion pack. Chris Anderson has spent months casting spells with hundreds of other people and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on. *Ruins Of Kunark* doesn't really offer any radical changes, but in this case bigger really is better.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ALLEGIANCE

PCZ #91 • 82%

✪ The first true online only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, co-ordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

ASHERON'S CALL

PCZ #88 • 76%

✪ The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in real life, it's a great tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

ULTIMA ONLINE: RENAISSANCE

PCZ #92 • 75%

✪ It's been at the top for a while, but now that the sequel is on the way the original looks dated. *Renaissance* isn't enough of an improvement for it to compete with *EverQuest* – online RPGs are moving on.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

PLANETARIUM

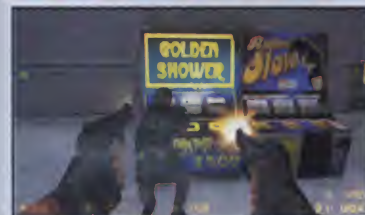
PCZ #94 72%

✪ Available free from the Net, *Planetarium* is the work of three out-of-work Norwegians. A turn-based sci-fi strategy game with minimal graphics, it still manages to absorb you with its playability.

PUBLISHER Planetarium • www.planetarium.com

MODS

COUNTER-STRIKE



PCZ #95 • 93%

✪ They say the best things in life are free, but until *Counter-Strike* arrived in the ZONE office we never knew what they were talking about. Not only is *Counter-Strike* the most popular shooter online, it's also the most addictive substance known to man. Don't start playing it if you want to keep your life intact, and don't blame us when you start mouthing the words "Go! Go! Go!" in your sleep.

DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net

ROCKET ARENA 3

PCZ #94 • 89%

✪ *Quake III* hasn't convinced everyone, but if you want pure deathmatch there's nothing better, especially when you add the *RA3* mod. You start off with full ammo and armour, and fight in specially designed one-on-one arenas. Class.

DOWNLOAD www.planetquake.com/quake3

FIREARMS

PCZ #94 • 81%

✪ Another copy of *Counter-Strike* for *Half-Life*? Well, yes, but *Firearms* looks set to be more epic in scope, with large maps, dozens of weapons to choose from, including grenade launchers, and the dreaded minefields.

DOWNLOAD www.firearmsmod.com

Q3 JAILBREAK

PCZ #92 • 81%

✪ Quite often, the simple things in life are the most satisfying. Take *JailBreak*. It's *Quake 3* with two jails and two sides, but the team-based play adds a balance that's not present in standard deathmatch modes.

DOWNLOAD www.teamreaction.com

STRIKE FORCE V1.4

PCZ #96 • 83%

NEWENTRY Baring more than a passing resemblance to *Tactical Ops*, *Strike Force* is the best *UT* mod available, and if you're looking for something similar to *Counter-Strike* only with bots, look no further.

DOWNLOAD www.planetunreal.com/strikeforce

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS



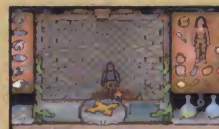
DOOM

✪ This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.



ULTIMA VII

✪ Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

✪ We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.



DUNE II

✪ If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles is testament to its staying power.



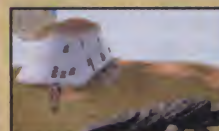
SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

✪ EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.



UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

✪ This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.



MAGIC CARPET

✪ Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.



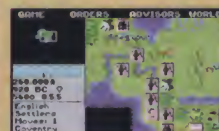
WING COMMANDER

✪ The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people ever learn?



TOMB RAIDER

✪ She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?



CIVILIZATION

✪ The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

EXTENDED PLAY

In the dock this month is Massive Entertainment's marvellous real-time strategy game, *Ground Control*. We've got both single and multiplayer missions aplenty to submit as evidence on the CD and trust that justice will prevail... you be the judge

★ ON THE BENCH Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF



On this month's cover CD we've got all the maps mentioned in these pages. To try out any of these files, either run them as an .exe where appropriate or unzip them into the `sierra/gc/data/maps` directory on your PC. Then all you have to do is select them from the in game on-screen options and enjoy.

“In creating *GC* the development team at Massive threw away the strategy game rulebook and decided to come up with something a bit different”

GROUND CONTROL

The world of *Ground Control* is – surprise, surprise – based in the aftermath of a devastating nuclear war and sees you taking control of various Crayven forces on the disputed colony of Krig-7b. Your opposition are troops of the Order of the New Dawn (OND), and a thoroughly unpleasant band of religious nutters they are too. Heavily armed, passionately faithful to their beliefs, and with a heartfelt desire to kick your armoured butt back off the planet, they make for an enemy that only a foolish commander would treat with disrespect. This game will get the old grey matter working overtime. It is a superb mixture of 3D action blasting and cerebral tactics.

In creating *GC*, however, the development team at Massive threw away the strategy game rulebook and decided to come up with something a bit different. Out went the need to build a base and scabble around finding resources to work with. Into the bin flew the almost

obligatory view from above. In fact, the whole RTS game concept took something of a battering as the Massive team set about adding a new twist to the genre.

So, in place of the more familiar RTS offering, along came a masterpiece that offered not only in-depth battle tactics, but also the opportunity to get into the action within a couple of minutes. The remote camera facility allows you to observe the action from the air or stand virtually shoulder-to-shoulder with your troops, and share their triumphs (or failures) first hand.

You really can play *Ground Control* however you like. Armchair generals who fancy leaping straight into the fray to lead their forces in a death-or-glory attack can do just that (and good luck to them – they'll need it), while hardened campaigners can choose their troops and armour, select an approach to gain the element of surprise and win the day through superior tactics. Either way it's great fun. Now, onto the maps...



Now that's a blast.

★ North Pole

Filename: 15230_NorthPole.zip

Size: 624Kb

Players: Single

Rating: ★★★

An assault attack where you have 12 squads at your disposal. The OND have a mountain base and your task is to fight your way in before destroying a well protected relic. The mountainous layout will make life difficult for your armour, so remember that infantry can climb a lot better than tanks can, so use them to soften up the defences. Help Sergeant Cole get a truck full of explosives to the relic and wait for the fireworks! This one isn't easy, as OND aircraft will find you very quickly and the rate of attrition is frightening.



OND air superiority makes North Pole very difficult.

★ The POW Camp

Filename: 20827_ThePOW

Camp.zip

Size: 643Kb

Players: Single

Rating: ★★★

Your task is to break into an OND camp and liberate the prisoners held there. Subtlety is the name of the game – use your Jaeger troops for their stealth and greater viewing range. If any of your troops are spotted all hell

will break loose! Reinforcements will arrive if you're rumbled, and you can always try fighting your way in and out, but that course of action will probably end in tears! Get out with the rescues to the evac zone to win.

★ The Dropship Base

Filename: 28176_TheDropship

Base.zip

Size: 729Kb

Players: Single

Rating: ★★★

Your task is to defend the base and stop OND forces from destroying its anti-aircraft defence systems. Remember, AA sites make a soft target and since you only have six squads you're going to have to react quickly to enemy attacks. Don't let the OND destroy the AA systems because you won't like the consequences!



Only the APC left... this really is not going well.

★ Enrica Valley

Filename: EnricaValley.zip

Size: 450Kb

Players: Single

Rating: ★★★

Your boss, Director Enrica Hayes, has been rather clumsy and has found herself trapped by OND forces who are moving to take over an abandoned Crayven Base.

ORDERS REVENGE



Tank battle mayhem.

As you're the only person crazy enough to take on the rescue mission it falls upon you to go in and get her out. The base is in a narrow canyon with only one way out, so make sure you don't get trapped. Use the APC to move your single squad around quickly.



➊ Superb detail as ever in *Ground Control*.

➊ **Orders Revenge**

Filename: 14717_Orders

Revenge.zip

Size: 578Kb

Players: Single

Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

In this map there's a change of tack as you take the role of an OND commander. Attack bases and convoys wherever you can, but beware, this map is under Crayven control. Your aim is to take out the main Crayven base, but listen out for mid-mission updates! You have 12 squads at your disposal.

➋ **DM_Moonbase(2)**

Filename: 19342_DM_Moonbase (2).zip

Size: 208Kb

Players: Multi

Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

The name gives the style of this two-player deathmatch away. Lots of places to hide, lots of nooks and crannies from which to creep up on your enemy.

➌ **SK_Skandinavia**

Filename: 15811_SK_

Skandinavia.zip

Size: 323kb

Players: Single

Rating: ⚡⚡⚡⚡

Author Nicklas says that trying this one on your own is not to be recommended and no doubt he's right. Your mission is to defend a Crayven base from OND forces for a mere 30 minutes, but with the attacks coming thick and fast you'll be hard pressed to survive, let alone inflict much in the way of damage on them. Run the map with at least two players and team up to fight the OND!



➍ You'll need help to survive the OND attack in this map.

➎ **Desert Storm**

Filename: 24869_Desert

Storm.zip

Size: 168Kb

Players: Single

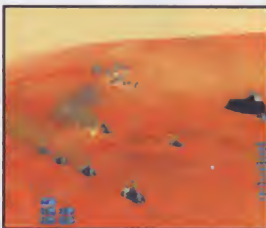
Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

Author Klaus describes this map as being designed for everyone who likes tanks and he certainly hasn't wasted time by putting much else in the map! It's a clean, quick and simple search and destroy mission, which you can play when you have some time to kill. There are lots of enemy forces around so get stuck in.

➏ **POW CAMP**



When discovered in the POW camp, fighting is the only option.



➐ A simple map, but it's action packed.

➑ **Prisoner Convoy**

Filename: 28923_Prisoner

Convoy.zip

Size: 915Kb

Players: Single

Rating: ⚡⚡⚡

A Prisoner convoy has to cross OND controlled desert and sure enough, the OND will attack to liberate their troops. Your task is to protect the convoy from the OND attacks, both by repelling attacks and by clearing a path for the convoy to travel through.



➒ Seems like a lot of troops to guard a prisoner convoy.

➓ **Insomniac Map Pack**

Filename: 14000_insomniac

GCMaPac01.zip

Size: 9.73Mb

Players: Multiplayer – varies

Rating: ⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡

At nearly 10Mb in size, the Insomniac Map Pack is a true labour of love. It's a self-extracting file (so the usual caveats about playing with .exe files apply), which means you don't even have to go through the aggravation of unzipping it

yourself. The only point to remember is that it will extract to the default GC location, so if you have the game on a second or other logical drive you might have to move the files. Inside you will discover no less than five multiplayer mission maps, each with Deathmatch, Score Zone and Flag Zone variants. Here's a quick look at what the Insomniac Map Pack has to offer:

➊ Pyramid City – Dense jungle will hide your troops at the start of the map but the plateau with the pyramids is very open, so beware. Keep moving and use whatever cover is available.
➋ White Owl – Rough, frozen terrain with low hills and some dying vegetation. Few places to hide make for constant combat.
➌ Crossroads – A huge artificial arena cut from the living rock. The arena is designed for settling corporate arguments.

➍ Ghost Valley – Dry plains mean mainly low ground, but some high icy plateaus provide vantage points that can be used to your advantage.

➎ Moonlight Garden – An unusual landscape of hills, jungle and marshland. Use the higher ground to check around you and the rest to hide in.

➓ **Massive Map Pack**

Filename: GCMaPac01.exe

Size: 1.67Mb

Players: Single and multi

Rating: ⚡⚡⚡⚡

And last, but by no means least, the much talked about add-on from the *Ground Control* developers. It's another self-extracting jobbie and when it has done its stuff you'll find three new maps in the maps sub-

A clever deathmatch arena with lots of ambush potential.



MOONBASE

directory – *SK1_DesertStorm*, *AS1_DeathValley* and *AS2_Dominate*. The first of these is a single-player map while the others are for multiplayer scenarios. Read the included .txt file for full information but in the meantime, here's a quick rundown:

➊ SK1_DesertStorm – You'll find yourself dropped in the middle of the map and the simple objective is to survive for as long as you can. Enemy attacks can come from all directions and you'll slowly be worn down. Try to last until the time runs out.

➋ AS1_DeathValley – Two players get a base each and the means to defend it. Problem is, that while defending your base you're also meant to destroy the other one. This leads to a heart-wrenching decision about which troops to lead in an attack and which to leave behind. And if you only take half your forces and the enemy brings across all of theirs, you could get thrashed in the desert without even seeing your target!

➌ AS2_Dominate – Two players get a base and two outposts each. Each location has a drop zone, which the players can use to defend and/or launch attacks on the enemy. If you lose a location you lose that drop zone. Capture all three enemy locations to win. 🏆

NET ADDRESSES

With a game as good as *Ground Control* it should come as no surprise that there are loads of fansites in addition to the 'official' ones. Some even allow fans who have created their own maps to upload them. You'll find all the maps listed here on these sites, along with a heap of other great stuff. Why not give them a whirl and then try your hand at designing some maps yourself?

www.pczone.co.uk

Your first point of reference should be the *ZONE* website. It features an extensive download section, so chances are you'll find everything you need right here.

www.sierrastudios.com/games/groundcontrol

Good Lordy. It's the official game site. It's full of information about the storyline, game features and just about everything to do with GC. Here you'll find the latest news, screens, movies, music and more details of the warring factions in *Ground Control* – the Crayven Corporation and the Order of the New Dawn. Only official maps are available for download.

www.massive.se

The home of Massive Entertainment. 'Nuff said.

www.insomniac.net

The website for the team that created the Insomniac Map Pack. They obviously never sleep because the site is stuffed full with goodies for the likes of GC and other games. Well worth a peek.

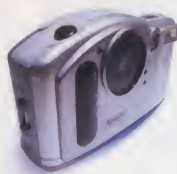
www.gccenter.com

A great site with loads of maps, screenshots, news and more.

www.groundcontrol.won.net

Lots of GC related news, screenshots, clan information and more.

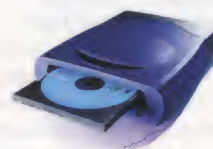
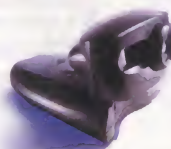
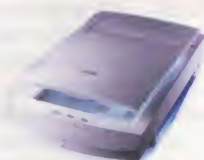
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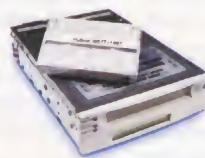
3,000 reviews



bags of expert advice



all the latest prices



one amazing web site

www.computershopper.co.uk

The only site you'll ever need for buying computer products

personal computers • notebook computers • printers • scanners • digital cameras • modems • CD and DVD drives • monitors • handheld computers • reference software
programming software • accessories • utilities • education • internet • games • 3D, animation & video software • web graphics software • video and photo capture
PDAs • software • graphics software • spreadsheets • illustration software • presentation graphics • audio software • business software • office suites
word processors • databases • personal finance software • speech recognition software • personal information software • project management software
networking • hard disks • tape drives • desktop publishing software • graphics cards • email • operating systems • components • sound cards • web tools • security

ON THE CD

★ WORDS Dave Woods and Martin Korda DISC Alan Stonebridge

Two CDs for the price of one? **PC ZONE** once again proves there is such thing as a free and delicious lunch

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

CD-ROM HELP Phone Interchange on 0152 5711 482 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk. Please do NOT phone the PC ZONE office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points

- ★ If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- ★ If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- ★ Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- ★ You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
- ★ Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- ★ Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D-accelerator only.



CD 1 DEMO

Fully featured to a third of the original game!

ICEWIND DALE

Interplay

EXCLUSIVE



From the infamous Black Isle Studios, home of the much-loved *Baldur's Gate* series, *Icewind Dale* is an epic RPG with the biggest demo we've ever seen. Topping an unbelievably heavyweight 648Mb of data, we've just about managed to cram the whole of this exclusive episode on to your second CD, saving you the potentially heart-breaking and wallet-smashing act of downloading it via your crummy 56K modem. (By our reckoning, it would take you about 65 hours.) It gets better. The generous developers have coded this demo so it's fully featured to a third of the original game, which means that you should still be playing this when Father Christmas tries to squeeze his unsightly pork-belly down your chimney – well almost. And, of course, when you've finally managed

to complete all the quests you don't have to say goodbye to the characters that you've come to love and cherish like your own. In a move that's as cunning as a dealer giving a user his first dose for free, the developers have enabled you to export your finished characters from this demo into the full commercial release. Now we know we're in the season of giving, but that's generosity taken too far.

So what are you waiting for? Unwrap your first big Christmas present of the year 2000, install the demo in some suitably large slot on your hard drive and enjoy RPGs as they're meant to be. First off, you'll need to create a party of characters, which can be as small as one or as large as six. The choices here are almost endless, with the full range of gender, race, alignment and the rest to choose from before settling on the all-important name. When you're satisfied it's off to the Forgotten Realm, and more specifically, the town of Easthaven to start your quest.

Controls Mouse and keyboard



☹ Poke him in the eye and he'll be as helpless as a little puppy.

Yet another WWF mismatch.



CD 2 DEMOS

HOMEWORLD
CATAclysm

Sierra

The second of our exclusive playable demos is a mission from the standalone add-on/sequel for the *Homeworld* Universe. No one thought that Barking Dog would be able to recreate the atmosphere of the original, but guess what? They only went and did it. *Cataclysm* is a must for *Homeworld* fans and, because it irons out some of the annoyances of the original, it's also the perfect starting point for newcomers. Check out this mission, give yourself a chance to get used to working in 3D space and then come back and tell us we're wrong. (We won't be holding our breath.)

Controls Mouse and keyboard

EXCLUSIVE



Rocks on the track cause huge delays.



Get yourself online and smack up some poor Dreamcast teeny-bopper.

4X4 EVOLUTION

Take 2 Interactive

EXCLUSIVE

We've been asking for an online racing game for ages and *4x4 Evolution* has not only given the lie to lazy developers who said it couldn't be done, but it's gone one step beyond, enabling you to play against Mac and Dreamcast users as well. It's the perfect opportunity for you to lay down the law and prove that PCs really do rule when it comes to games.

The game itself offers true off-roading, with no artificial track

boundaries and no linear paths to follow. You can literally go wherever you like, although passing through the checkpoints is advisable if you want to win cash and get new parts to upgrade your vehicle.

Although the Career mode has been disabled in the demo version, and you're limited to a couple of Nissans to drive around, every other feature is enabled including multiplayer. Good eh?

CHAMPIONSHIP
MANAGER 00/01

Eidos

EXCLUSIVE



Stand up if you hate Man U.

If you were in town early on Friday October 27, and you were wondering why there were queues outside your local Virgin store, here is your answer. The latest version of *Championship Manager* has spilled onto the streets and it's as compellingly addictive as ever. This demo enables you to try out a season in the life of any English team. You might fancy proving that you could replace Alex Ferguson with a monkey and still win the Premiership. Or, if like Steve Hill, your team is nestling down in the underbelly of the conference you might like to try to get them promoted and hope the same

happens in real life. Some chance, although Steve insists that fifth in the Conference really isn't that bad.

A few words of warning, though. *Champ Man* is, by all accounts, a horribly addictive game. If you've got a girlfriend, you might want to keep her at bay by lending her your wallet and credit cards for a few weeks. If you've made prior engagements, you'd be advised to cancel them before embarking on your quest. Managing a football team isn't something you should take lightly. It's a full-time 24x7 job.

Controls Keyboard/sheepskin jacket



A bit like Neighbours in space only better.

HALCYON SUN

Freelander.com

EXCLUSIVE

A massive two whole episodes of Kuju's epic space opera are on this month's CDs, offering you hours of entertainment. What makes the game so worthwhile isn't the graphics, though the developers were responsible for Microsoft's Xbox tech demos, neither is it the fact that as a story-driven game it may well out do the likes of *Starlancer* and *FreeSpace*. No, what makes *Halcyon Sun* worthy of attention is that you won't have to purchase the full and final game. Like all of the games available on the Freelander website, *Halcyon Sun* is completely free. These first two episodes, including the engine, are available now at www.freelander.com. However, we've saved you the download and a third should be ready as you read this, so as soon as you've finished playing through this lot you can download the tiny 3Mb file that unlocks the next part of the story. Further episodes will be released every other week. If you want to know more, turn to page 55 for our preview.

Please note that the version of *Halcyon Sun* on the PC ZONE CD is beta code. There have been problems with Windows 95 and ATI Rage Pro 3D card owners, so if you do have difficulties, please download the updated files from the Freelander site.

Controls Keyboard/mouse/joystick



CRIMSON SKIES

Microsoft

Finally we have a flight sim with a sense of humour. Forget realism and just aim on taking out the opposition while flying around, through, over and under any obstacle the developers throw at you. Whatever you see from the cockpit, the chances are you'll be able

to do something with it, and don't worry about complicated controls. If you can handle a joystick you can fly one of these planes. It might not appeal to hardcore armchair flyboys, but for everyone else it's a breath of fresh air.

Controls Keyboard/joystick

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

Fox Interactive

Who's the number one super spy in the film world? And the number one action hero on the PC? Mix them together, with a hefty dose of *Austin Powers* and you get the star of NOLF, which follows the adventures of one Cate Archer (the name's Archer, Cate Archer).

Armed with an array of exotic weaponry as well as a selection of weird and wonderful gadgets, you have to track down and eliminate the leaders of an evil organisation called HARM. Notably, this is the first FPS to sport the new LithTech 2.5 engine, which means it looks stunning and doesn't play too shabbily either. Groovy.

Controls Mouse and keyboard



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

Sierra

Currently the best golf sim around (and Keith Pullin should know, he *is* Tiger Woods), this extract from *PGA Championship Golf 2000* introduces you to the marvellous subtleties of the superb Trueswing system. Instead of the archaic tri-click, you have to direct your shots by controlling your club with the movements of your mouse. It's tricky to begin with, and you might start off by slicing your coffee cup

into your hard drive, but believe us, once tasted it is never forgotten.

Controls Mouse



INSANE

Codemasters

Driving games don't get a lot better or funnier than this. It takes a lot to reduce the *ZONE* team to helpless hysterics, but *Insane* has managed it on many an occasion. Similar in style to *Midtown Madness*, it's one of the most addictive and entertaining racers ever to grace the PC. While it's fun playing against the computer opponents, the best way to experience *Insane* is by playing with your friends over a LAN or the Internet. Remarkably, this demo is online-enabled so you'll be able to experience the best of both worlds.

Remember that cars in *Insane* take physical and visual damage and can often leave you inside something that looks like it's been through the crusher. Lose both wheels on one

side of your vehicle and you'll have to take time out to repair your craft (backspace on the keyboard) or spend the rest of the game going round in circles.

Controls Keyboard/gamepad/wheel



CULTURES

THQ

This *Settlers*-a-like scored well last issue and should keep you in micro-management heaven until the next version of the original is released. Taking control of a tribe of Vikings, you have to sail the seas in search of 12 parts of a comet, which the elders believe will help bring prosperity to your lands. Along the way you have to keep an eye on every aspect of your people's well-being, including finding them a spouse and making sure they're all happy and well fed.

Controls Mouse and keyboard



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

Eidos

Just why has it taken so long for someone to realise that coding a game around a hitman is a superb idea. You've seen *Leon*, and we know that you've secretly fantasised about playing the lone killer, with the whole world (aside from a pot plant and an attractive little girl) against you. Now you can live out your dreams, courtesy of this brand new 3D adventure from Eidos. Remember, you're not playing *Quake III*, and you're not going to survive if you start jumping up and down and strafing round VIPs. *Capisce?*

Controls Mouse and keyboard

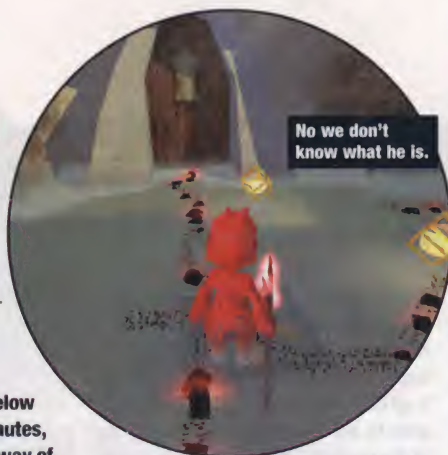


GIFT

Cryo

3D platform games? We've spat 'em in disgust at the breakfast table. Too samey, you see. If a platform game is going to stay below tonsil level for more than five minutes, it's got to offer something in the way of originality, which, thankfully, is what you get if you sample the delights of the latest cuddly romp from Cryo.

Try and spot the parodies of failed computer game heroes along the way if



you must, but the real delight here lies in the imaginative use of light and dark puzzles. If you're not sure what we're on about, turn to page 97 for a full review.

Controls Keyboard/gamepad

FROGGER 2

Hasbro

Back in the days when *PC ZONE* was being wowed by the first coin-ops, a few games were lifted from the ranks of 2x10p wonders. Mention the words *Scramble*, *Mr Do* and *Hypersports* and Dave Woods' face glazes over and he starts rummaging in his trouser pockets for loose change. Another classic back in the days when games were games is *Frogger*. And what you've got here is a demo of the updated version from Hasbro. Its facelifts haven't always been successful, but in *Frogger 2* you've got a perfectly playable 3D version of the original. The graphics are cute and the camera angles intelligible. And that's a good thing.

Controls Keyboard/gamepad



BREAKOUT

Hasbro



Another updated classic, this time from the beginning of time itself. Imagine the bat from *Pong*, a wall of bricks and a ball. Destroy wall with ball. End of story. Simple but fiendishly addictive, and a game that spawned hundreds of excellent clones, such as *Arkanoid*. Now try the same concept in a sort of 3D, with chickens, crates and pyramids. It sounds weird and it is, but it's also fun in a kooky sort of way.

Controls Keyboard/mouse/gamepad

DARK REIGN 2

Activision

Dark Reign is a huge name in the history of the RTS genre, but we weren't particularly taken by the sequel, scoring it a little over the average 50. Controversial? Not really, as a lot of people have testified after playing the game, but in the spirit of fairness it's only right that you should be given the opportunity to judge for yourselves.

Controls Mouse and keyboard



ON THE CD PATCHES

All the latest patches for all your favourite games

Crimson Skies v1.01

Demise v342

PGA Championship Golf 2000

3.1.23.2

Pharaoh Enhancement pack & v1.2

Reach For The Stars v1.1

Rollercoaster Tycoon Loopy

Landscapes

Shogun: Total War v1.12

Sim Theme Park v2.0

Soldier Of Fortune v1.06 Gold

Traffic Giant v1.3

ON THE CD ESSENTIALS

To make your computer more user friendly, all you have to do is install this little lot

WinZip 8.0

Windows Media Player 7.0

Gamespy 3D 2.19

Neotrace 2.12a

PingTool 2.6a

Winsock 2

DUN Manager 2.0d

FTP Explorer

GetRight 4.2c

MIRC 5.71

mPlayer

ICQ2000a Build 3140

Roger Wilco Mk1.1a

Claranet

Datum Online

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY

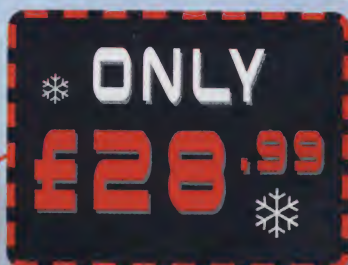
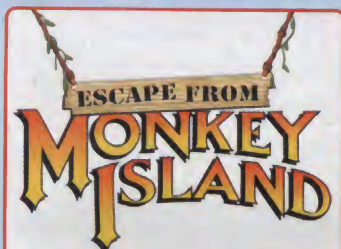
Turn to page 160, where Tony Lamb will fill you in on all of the *Ground Control* maps that are featured on this month's CD

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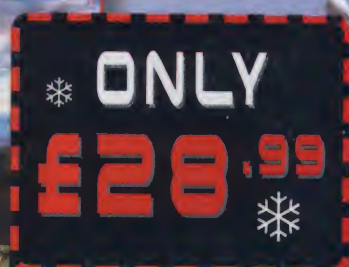


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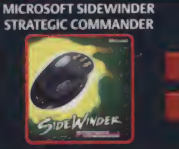
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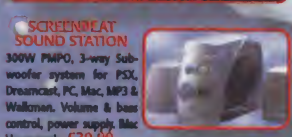


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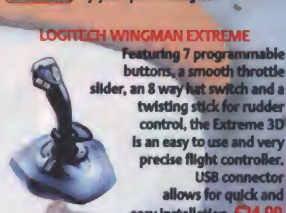
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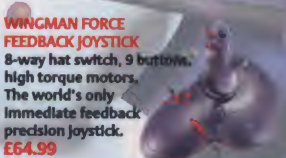
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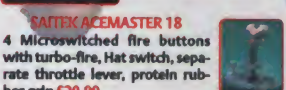
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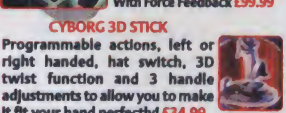
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THE LIONHEAD DIARIES



Dancing bears, cruelty to poor innocent creatures and wanton violence? Do you ever wonder about the world games developers inhabit?

AS OBSERVED BY Steve Jackson

THE .LHX FILES

We're into the endgame. *Black & White* is having the finishing touches put in place right now. Although the workload is as heavy as ever, the sorts of things we're doing are different these days. Gone are the days of inventing. Now the whole team is smoothing, polishing, tweaking and improving. For example, Scawen Roberts, our in-game physics programmer has been spending the last week playing the game and watching how every object interacts with every other object. Occasionally, he'd call out: "Hey, would you expect a wooden building to be damaged if you threw a person at it with great force?" or, "How long would it take someone to drown?" This last point led to a big discussion about floating objects. Because you as a god can do so much in the game, it's possible to rip out an entire forest, tree by tree, and fling it into the ocean.

Eventually, the processor, having to calculate the positions, collisions and movement of so many physics objects, would start getting a headache and the game would inevitably become slower. A rule of thumb in the studio is never to restrict the player wherever possible, so there had to be another way of preventing people, animals and other game objects from clogging up the waters of Eden. The solution, like all the best ones, was simple. Everything should eventually sink. Given enough time, even trees will get waterlogged and disappear into Davy Jones' locker.


Once Scawen had that one solved, it was back to the world of creature navigation for a bit, trying to shave a few more hundredths of a second from his route planning algorithms. Meanwhile, the art team are finalising the look of the game. Everything, from the skies to the buildings to the creatures is being checked to see if there's room for refining or improvement. Every villager has a face modelled on a real person and, as they all have their own unique set of desires, wishes and fear, they are all individuals.

But the one thing they don't all have is names, or rather, they didn't. We realised that most people's PCs have a list of names already, stored in their

outlook address book. A quick bit of coding was written to interrogate this, and, soon after, we were able to automatically assign these names to people in the game. But, having done this, it occurred to artist Jamie Durrant that you might not want to have all the people in your address book living in your own private Eden. So the whole list is now editable within the game. You can add or remove names as you wish, without altering your address book.

If you go into any software development studio, you'll see a large number of the staff with headphones on. Occasionally they're listening to the game sounds and effects but, on the whole, they're listening to music. Lionhead is no exception and, as everyone has WinAmp on their machines, it occurred to 3D programmer Alex Evans that we could create a *Black & White* plug-in for it. He'd already written the audio synchronisation code that enables the characters in the game to move their mouths in sync as the words they say are being played. After a little thought, he came up with lines of code that takes any music being played on the computer and isolates the rhythm and the beats per minute. He brought in Eric Bailey, Lionhead's animator, who wrote a series of dance routines for the game's Brown Bear. The final job was to link the two together, so that the Bear dances in perfect time to any music you play, right on the beat. This was then turned into a WinAmp plug-in. Now we're all able to host private animated discos, with *B&W* creatures break dancing to our own CDs. It is quite simply superb. All this activity hasn't deflected the team's work on the game, however. When you've worked on a project like this for three years, you tend to be extremely close to it. More than one Lionhead employee has reported having dreams about the game night after night.

This closeness to the project isn't always for the best. For example, everyone in the company knows how to play through most of the challenges and quests instinctively now. It's only when we get testers, friends and partners to play the game from scratch that we realise people want to learn different things in different ways. Building a game of such flexibility means that we're catering for people who want to get straight in and are happy to learn as they play, as well as people who will arm themselves with every scrap of helpful info they can before launching themselves fully into the world of Eden.

One of the nicest things about being at this stage of *Black & White* is that nearly everyone in the company has their own creature, and has already invested a lot of time and effort into him. Although this is to test the creature's artificial intelligence, it's impossible to train, teach and play with your creature and not get attached emotionally to him. A quick look around the studio shows that Richard Evans' creature is the most advanced. This isn't surprising as he wrote the AI. Peter's creature is the most experienced, Tim Rance's is probably the most good-hearted and Scawen's is the evilest by a long chalk. From the moment he gleefully fed his Tiger a villager, the poor thing was always destined to tread a path of darkness. The theory is you end up with a creature that mirrors your personality. Sorry Scawen. 



As well as being a director of developer Lionhead, Steve Jackson is co-founder of Games Workshop, author of Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks, and a columnist for The Daily Telegraph.

END ZONE THE WORLD ACCORDING TO... THE WORLD ACCORDING TO...

DAVE GEORGESON

Having been overshadowed in recent times by Valve and Blizzard, *Paul Presley* catches up with the man responsible for reawakening Dynamix, Sierra's other sleeping giant

It never fails to surprise me just how *nice* American game developers are. Not that our home-grown bunch aren't all paragons of upstanding wonderfulness, of course. It's just that you'd expect the Americans to be so much more... professional. You know, official. Corporate. Instead, not only do I find Dynamix's senior producer, Dave Georgeson, more than willing to drop everything for an impromptu half-hour interview, but he is also about to depart for a get together with several hundred *Tribes* fans to show off the latest alpha build of the much-anticipated sequel.

Dynamix is something of an enigma at the moment. Years ago it was one of the few big names of the industry. Flight sims, such as *Red Baron* and *A-10 Tank Killer*, adventure games, such as *Heart Of China* and *Rise Of The Dragon*, and strategy games, such as *Outpost*, earned the label a legacy as rich as any of the pre-millennium developers. Then things went quiet – almost deathly so. This wasn't helped by the constant corporate buy-outs that plagued Sierra, nor by the lukewarm reception of the long-awaited *Red Baron 3D*, and Dynamix almost vanished off the face of the gaming map.

Dave Georgeson has been given the unenviable task of getting the company back on track again, a feat that's largely dependant on the success of *Tribes 2*.

How important is the whole *Tribes* range to Dynamix these days?

Pretty important. As far as Dynamix is concerned, right now *Tribes 2* is it. We're starting pre-production on other projects, but *Tribes 2* is basically what we boiled it all down to so we could rebuild after the whole buy-out debacle.

How did all that buying and selling affect you? Oh it was huge. I got hired to come in and essentially change the way Dynamix was run. They'd had all the lay-offs and there was the big mess that was going on before Havas bought us. I was hired to stop all the internal bleeding, turn the morale around, get the projects going the way they needed to go, and essentially grow Dynamix into something that could compete with the other members of the Sierra family, like Valve and Blizzard.

It must have been a daunting prospect...

Actually, I really wanted to do it. A lot of times in this industry everything boils down to morale, so what I did was try to figure out what everybody wanted. We're up here in Oregon – which is a long way from the rest of the industry. It's a small town, it's very green and nice, it's a great place to actually live and work, but people need to be excited by the work as well as the workplace. Quite honestly, they were pretty dismayed by the whole lay-off thing and all the blood-letting that was going on. Basically, I had to let them know that all that was over with, and that we were going to grow from where we were. That we were going to make sure *Tribes 2* was a great cornerstone from which to build on and that if we could make it a triple-A title that everyone wanted to buy, Sierra was essentially going to write us some blank cheques. We'd be able to go forward and make everybody's career take off, which in turn would allow us to start building other franchises.

How long ago was that?

About six months or so.

What else was Dynamix working on at the time? Nothing. Well sort of. You see Dynamix has two sides. There's the core game group and the casual side. The casual side has been turning out all kinds of stuff, such as *Train Town And The Incredible Machine*, fishing, hunting and pinball titles – that kind of stuff. Not what we'd call 'core' games. Not the kind of games that magazines like you will cover most of the time.

Meanwhile, the core group had grown stagnant...

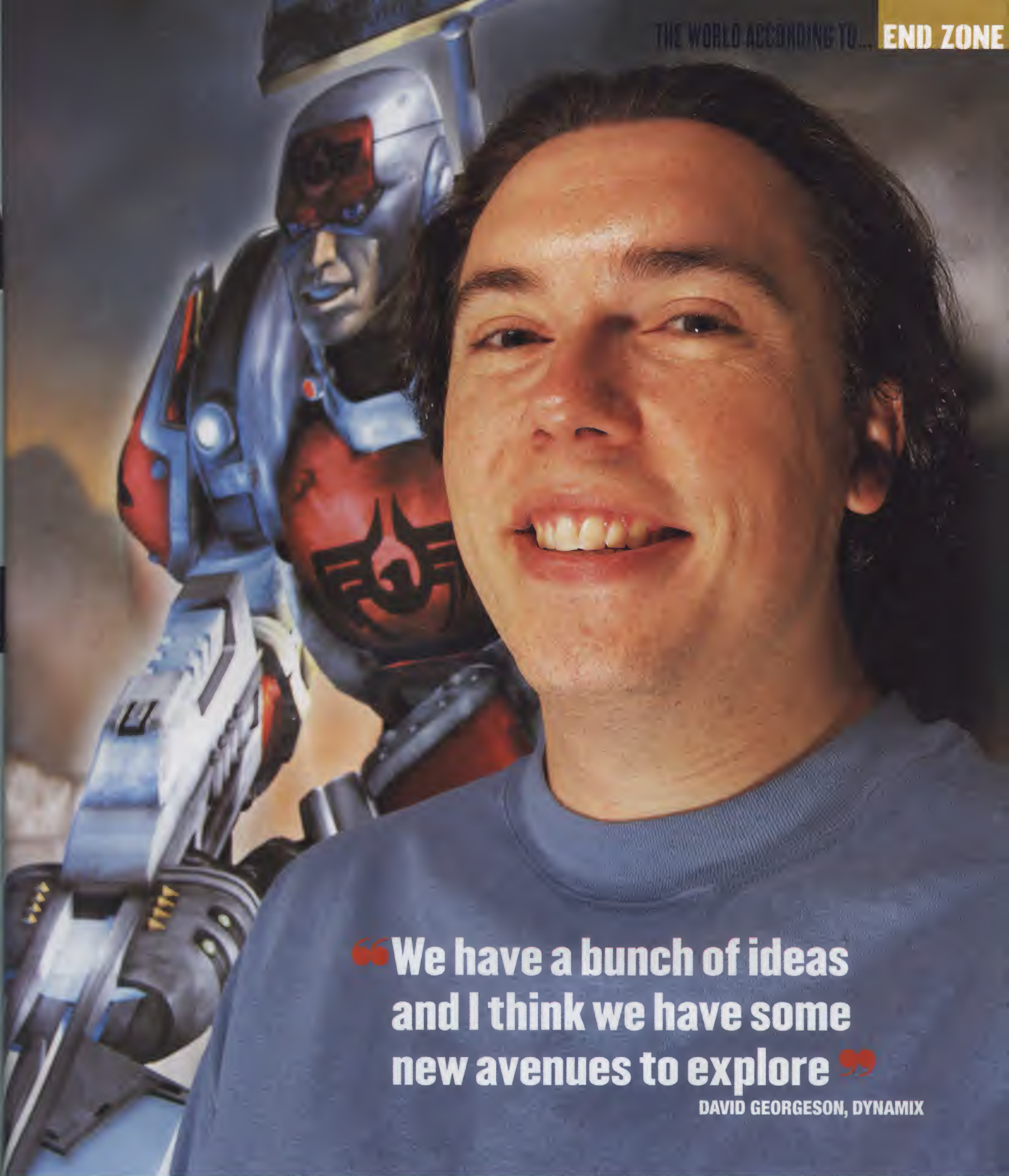
There was *Tribes* and *Tribes 2* but, quite honestly, Dynamix had lost a lot of talent – a lot of people simply refused to trust Sierra anymore. So when I came in we essentially had a clean slate. There was the old Dynamix and there is the new Dynamix, and they are essentially two different companies. I think we're running things a lot better now than we were before. There's a lot more pre-production and a lot more planning. We're a lot more coherent about things now, rather than just growing the projects organically, which is what used to happen before.

There's certainly been a quiet period. Especially compared to the old days when you were pretty much the star of Sierra...

Oh, we'll be a star again, real soon. (laughs)

Just how different is the Dynamix of today to the way it used to be?

It used to take them a long time to make their games, simply because they used to design on the fly. That method has merits in that all the team feel as though they're participating a lot, but there's a lot of round-table discussions. Everyone talks about what should and shouldn't be in the game



“We have a bunch of ideas and I think we have some new avenues to explore”

DAVID GEORGESON, DYNAMIX

and people are always changing things. Now while it's kind of exciting to build a game that way, it's really frustrating that it takes you three-and-a-half years to build something.

How many people are at Dynamix these days?
There's only about 25 people on the core side right now, but as a whole there's a little over a hundred

people. There's a lot of casual teams. They do a lot of stuff over there.

How important is the casual side to your survival?
(laughing) It's amazing how much cash those teams make. They're generally quick turn-around games and the teams are fairly small. They're a high return on investment and they quietly sell their projected

40 to 50,000 units before moving on to their next project. It's just constant money.

What kind of people work on the casual games? Do they ever want to cross over and work on 'real' games?

Some of them want to move over. But it's a very different mindset working over there. They tend



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The Dynamix team looking happy and relaxed. Happy and relaxed people make excellent games.

to be less rabid about things and they have very quick turn-arounds – four to five months and then they move on. It's just a different way of working, more nine to five than over here. We tend to work for *lurrve*. (laughs)

In the past, you did everything from real-time strategy games and adventures to flight sims. You seem much more focussed on the online-only genre now...

Well, I'm one of those people who really believes that online gaming is some of the best gaming that exists. So what I'm trying to do – and the direction I'm trying to move Dynamix in – is a lot more online stuff. Not necessarily just doing *Tribes*-style action games, but all sorts of genres that have online community components. And not just massively multiplayer games either. We're looking at lots of different ways to experiment with the Internet and get people involved on a mass scale, even if it's a heavily storyline-based game. We're always going to have some kind of online component in our

games. But, having said that, I also wouldn't mind making a single-player experience on the Xbox.

Does that mean you feel the PC no longer has a future as a single-player games machine? Oh I think it does, it's just that I don't know how much I'm interested in it on the PC myself. It's not that you can't do it well, it's just that most of what you can do has already been done. We have a bunch of ideas here that we've been talking over and I think we have some new avenues to explore.

But it does seem to be the case that everyone is making the shift away from single-player games these days, though. All we hear about is online this and multiplayer that...

Single-player is cool, but it's rarely as involving as playing with other people. I don't know how old you are, but you might remember the old paper and pen role-playing games. You'd sit around a table with five or six guys, drink a load of beer, screaming your head off pretending to be a dwarf. It was fun.

But that kind of visceral experience still doesn't occur in online gaming and I aim to make it happen.

In what ways?

Games aren't making things personal enough. Massively multiplayer games, for instance, comprise of thousands of people in the same world and you never get much in the way of personal contact with them – not to the same level as sitting around a table with five other guys. Single-player games are totally impersonal. Usually you're running through someone else's story, playing a game written by a frustrated writer. What we need to be designing are games that really get you involved in the story and, if possible, involved with the same small group of people so that you make long-term friends. Small-group co-operative multiplayer games have a real future.

Is there anything out there at the moment that comes close to this?

Not really, certainly not at the moment. *Vampire* tried to go in that direction but I think that it pretty

← much failed. It was a very good experiment, though, and it certainly set some wheels in motion in my head.

You learn from your mistakes, or possibly from other people's...

Those are the best ones.

How have some of the *Tribes 2* rivals such as *Halo* and *TF2*, affected things?

Halo kind of kicked it in gear for us for a while... until they got bought by Microsoft and we pretty much figured that it wasn't going to come out anytime soon. As I understand it, Bungie has apparently said that it's ready to release whenever it wants to, but it would seem to be pretty dumb for Microsoft to release anything before the Xbox version. It'll want *Halo* to be one of its first-wave titles, meaning it won't want to see it on other platforms first.

Some of us are still wondering if it will even appear on the PC...

Yeah, I think it will. I mean, it's too easy to port it. They pretty much just have to do the compatibility tests. Now, whether it will be on the Mac or not is another question... Uncle Bill might just have something to say about that.

You mentioned an interest in the Xbox yourself earlier. How have the next-generation consoles influenced things at Dynamix?

I really love consoles. Personally, I think there's a lot that you can do with game types on consoles that haven't been done before because people always tend to get locked into a certain kind of mentality. Because of this they don't stretch outside the box very often.



The boys at Dynamix reminisce about the good old days of pen-and-paper RPGs.

“What we want to do here is have a couple of cash cows so that we can afford to take some risks with, let's say, a fantasy Xbox title”

DAVE GEORGESON, DYNAMIX



We've had a look at the latest *Tribes 2* code and we know why they're looking so smug.

Why is that?

Well, usually console teams are fairly small – unless you're talking about Square or somebody – and something like a racing game is much easier to construct than a fantasy role-playing game, for instance. So you tend to get a lot of the same kind of games because they're known quantities and you can build within the box – the fighting and racing games and so on. Taking risks is, well, risky and if you're a small company with only one or two products, then it's tough. What we want to do here is have a couple of cash cows so that we can afford to take some risks with, let's say, a fantasy Xbox title. I have some ideas that I'd love to try out and I think we could do a really great job.

Do you think this is a plan that most existing PC developers will try to follow?

As far as the industry goes, PC development is going to have to change, there's no doubt about that. With the kind of games that we've been making, the return of investment on them

keeps getting narrower and narrower and narrower. The reason why is that our gamers keep getting more and more jaded. They want bigger and better thrills all the time. So in order for somebody to come up with something that's even more photo-realistic and has really cool new special effects, you have to keep hiring bigger and bigger teams. Not only that, but for really great games, for triple-A titles, you basically have to hire veteran players within the industry. All of which means the salaries are much bigger. A few years back you used to be able to make a game for around a million-and-half bucks. Now you pretty much can't get away with anything less than four million and you're still only selling the same amount of units, most of the time.

Is there anyone making a profit on PC games anymore?

Yeah. The big boys are. Your Blizzards and Valves and guys like that. Quite honestly, I think what's going to happen is a lot more

stratification between the companies. There will be the people that always sell a million units on day one no matter what, and then there'll be the smaller people who only sell 50,000 units.

Will that be enough for them to survive?

They should be fine as long as they just do smaller games. As long as they don't try to compete with the triple-A titles.

Which is where you score with having both core and casual sides to your operation...
Absolutely.

You may laugh at games such as *Trophy Bass Fishing* and *3D Ultra Pinball*, but the truth is Dynamix wouldn't be here today without them. Georgeson has every right to see himself as the saviour of the brand, though. Had the company not refocused on the *Tribes* range and restructured itself, we may well have been lamenting the demise of yet another gaming industry legend. Instead we may just be witnessing its rebirth. [E]

TEAM TALK



Would you leave your job if you won a million?

Of course you would

★ STINKING Richie Shoemaker

After a very brief period of consultation, Mark Hill and myself have handed in our notice. Neither of us particularly liked our respective jobs anyway. Sure it's fun to play games and get paid to write about them, but when you consider the piss-poor pay, endless political infractions with software publishers and the constant whinging of the people you have to work with day in, day out, it's hardly worth getting out of bed of a morning. We might have left a few people in the lurch, some of whom are worth saying "hello" to every other day, but do we feel the least bit guilty? Not at all.

However, without sniffing out new gainful employment, leaving the cold shoulder of a soul-destroying job is like selling your house without first finding somewhere else to live. But in our case we can rest easy. Together we are Stinking Rich and Moneybags Mark, the first in the PC ZONE office to hit the virtual jackpot – without cheating – in our regular Friday afternoon *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* session – all thanks to Mark's knowledge of Shakespeare and my having paid attention to an episode of *Ground*

Force. We are loaded – or at least we would be had we won real money rather than virtual. Oh go on then, we'll stay.

Apart from the unimaginable bulge half a million notes would make to each of our bank accounts, the wake of our virtual windfall will no doubt have repercussions throughout the office. For one thing, the game has disappeared from Dave's hard drive, never to be played again. After all, what's the point when it's been won already? Of course, it might also have something to do with Dave and Richard Downey's (ad sales chap) utter failure at being able to secure anything more than £1,000. (They had to use up all their lifelines to get to £300 – but we won't rub it in.)

Popular game shows and *Counter-Strike* aside, a retro mood has hung over the offices of late.

In his ongoing mission to download every arcade game ever released, Dave has been reliving a misspent youth playing such 'classics' as *Mr Do* and *Scramble* via the arcade emulator MAME. He hasn't stopped there, either. Almost every day we hear the strained one-channel rendition of *Chariots Of Fire* as he battles to get past the pole-vault stage in *Hypersports*. More often than not Richard



The cheque is in the post, allegedly.

'Tricky Dickster' Downey is by his side as they take turns in drumming on the keyboard to near exhaustion. "Why not play *Sydney 2000*?" we say. "Because it's rubbish," replies Dave. Fair enough.

While on the subject of sport, we happen to be doing

form, scoring three goals in a tense 4-4 draw in the pissing rain against people within the company we'd never met before. Press-ganged into goal was freelance designer Colin, whose saving skills were on a par with Jesus. Likewise, sturdy defender

"In his ongoing mission to download every arcade game ever released, Dave has been reliving his misspent youth playing such 'classics' as *Mr Do* and *Scramble*"

rather well in the Dennis Publishing five-a-side tournament, currently half way through the season. Our most recent game saw player/manager Dave back from injury and in lightning

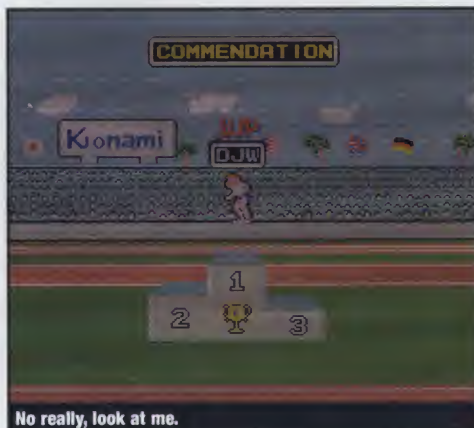
Martin 'The Wall' Korda managed to keep the opposition at bay, flinging himself ballerina-style into every tackle, putting down his assailants with a dazzling display of dexterity. Even

with a four-eyed goalie guarding the opposing net and the thumping right foot of Steve Hill, victory was eluded, thanks in part to a pitch so waterlogged that the ball floated rather than flew. Yours truly, bound for the duration to the subs bench, could only watch and get progressively wetter as the match dragged on. Still, at least I can be relied upon in an emergency, unlike Dave's 'phone a friend' friend.

Not that I care. I may not be the most athletic on the team, but at least I know that. Being a semi-millionaire, I'll soon be hiring a harem of magnificent young ladies to towel me down on a regular basis, wet or not.



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